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# AT THE FEET OF BAPU

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By
BRIJKRISHNA CHANDIWALA

Foreword
By
BABU RAJENDRA PRASAD

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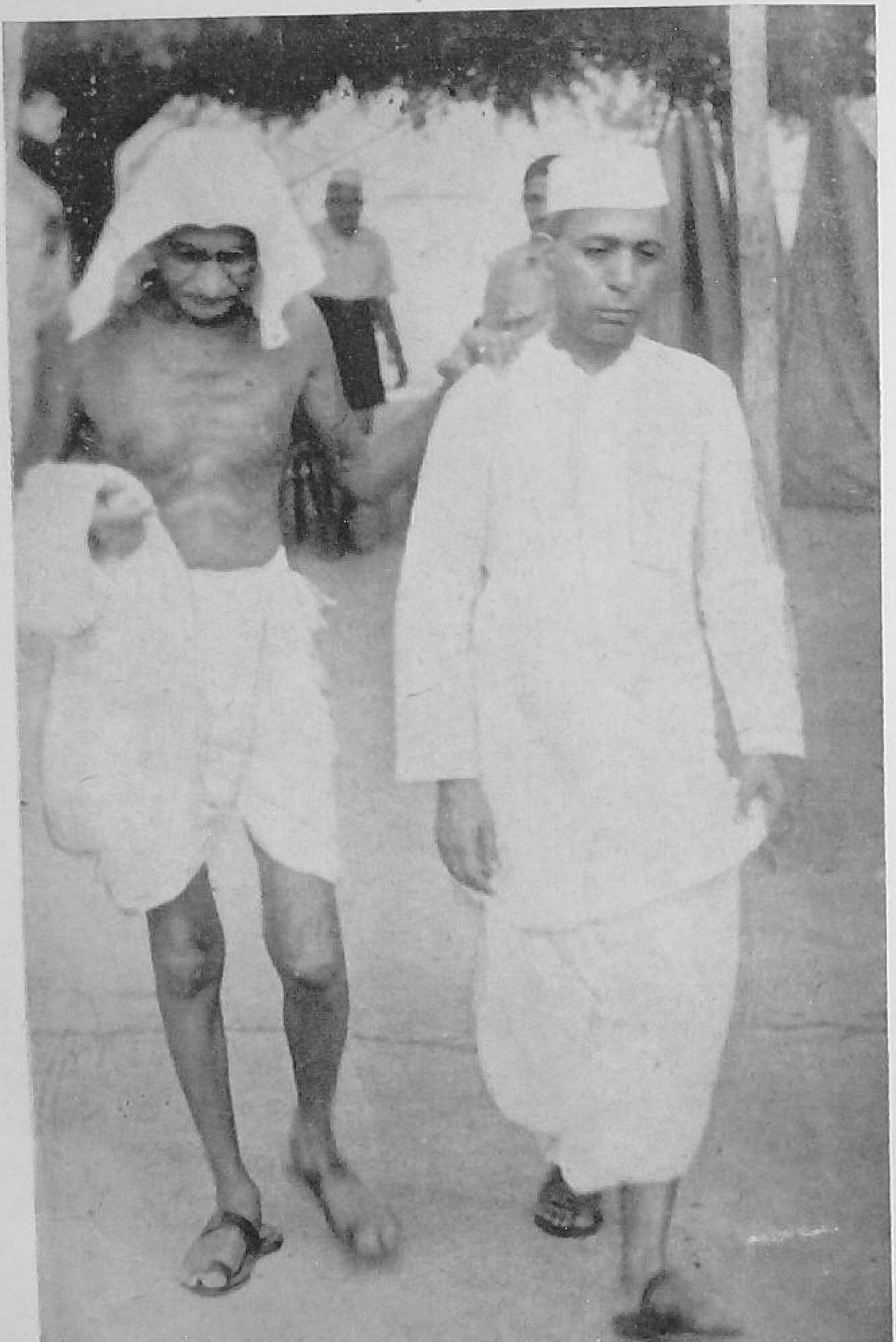
NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD



The Author with Bapu

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G. L. 7

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G.L.7.

# FOREWORD

Shri Brijkrishna Chandiwala is one of those quiet unassuming men who serve and wait without making or allowing others to make them and their services known. In 1949 he published his *Bapuke Charanonmen* in Hindi in which he gave a short but interesting and instructive account of his association with Mahatma Gandhi. He has expanded and enlarged what he wrote there in this book which is an English version of it. Mahatma Gandhi had innumerable followers and even more admirers. But a few only imbibed and tried to live in their own lives what he taught and stood for. Anything in the form of personal experiences and reminiscences coming from one such has a lasting value of its own. *At the Feet of Bapu* will be read with the interest which naturally attaches to such a book.

New Delhi, Rajendra Prasad

14-1-'54

## PREFACE

This is the English translation of my Hindi book *Bapuke Charanonmen.* Here is the modest history of my attempts to bring it out in English.

Gandhiji had given me the privilege of waiting upon him during his numerous sojourns in Delhi. During one of his visits to the Capital in 1946, when he was staying at Valmiki Mandir, a journalist friend persistently asked me to write for his paper, my reminiscences of Gandhiji. I have never been a writer and did not, in the beginning, take his suggestion seriously. He, however, would not leave me alone and, at his insistence, I attempted twice to put down on paper some of my recollections of the Great Master. But due to pressure of work, I could not make much progress. Gandhiji's assassination on January 30, 1948, however, changed the whole situation. Firstly, I lost my occupation. Secondly, various inaccurate accounts of this tragic and historical event began to appear in the Press. I, therefore, decided to publish a full and true account of Gandhiji's assassination. On my return from Allahabad, after the immersion of Gandhiji's ashes in the Ganga, I prepared a small article for the Press. This I read out to Devadas Gandhi, Martand Upadhyay, Krishnan Nair and others, who approved of it. Martand Upadhyay kindly offered to publish my article through the Sasta Sahitya Mandal. This gave me the necessary encouragement. I began to expand my article by adding my recollections of Gandhiji during the last twenty-four years. They were not few by any means. I delved into my diary, — a day-to-day record which I had kept since 1929. This is how my book, *At the Feet of Bapu* came into being. It appeared serially in the Hindi Daily, *Hindustan.* About this time, our President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, had made an Appeal, asking the people of India to contribute, at least ten

days' earnings, to the Gandhi National Memorial Fund. Since I was not gainfully employed during this period I solved the problem of my contribution by offering the rights of publication of my book to the Hindi Sahitya Mandal, provided they handed over whatever profits they made on it to the Fund. My offer was accepted, and the first edition of my book, which came out on August 30, 1948, was quickly sold out. The second edition was brought out the following year, and its Gujarati translation was published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad.

To have the book translated into English was my next ambition. My own knowledge of English being very poor, I approached several persons to translate the book into English for me. They invariably demanded some payment to which I was opposed in principle. Hence, I started translating the book into English myself, albeit laboriously. Somehow words came as I progressed on this vital piece of work and the task was accomplished without too much difficulty. I, however, hesitated to publish my English version of the book before it was revised by someone who knew English better than myself. There were men, who were willing to revise the book for me, but on payment of a fee. Here again, money stood in the way. Acharya N. R. Malkani was finally persuaded to revise my manuscript as a labour of love for Gandhiji and myself. He has tried to keep to my language, making corrections wherever necessary. I am deeply grateful to him, but he, being a member of Gandhiji's vast family, hardly needs any thanks from me. The language was still further revised by Smt. Lalita Kotwal, to whom I am greatly indebted.

1, Narendra Place, New Delhi
Assassination Day, 30-1-'53

Brijkrishna

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# AT THE FEET OF BAPU

GRAMASEVAKS TRAINING CENTRE
16 APR 1955
T. KALLUPATTI

# I

## FIRST ACQUAINTANCE

I recollect hearing of Gandhiji in my school days when I was a boy of thirteen. His Satyagraha campaign in South Africa was then in full swing. Subscriptions were collected from us Delhi students to aid his struggle. Delhi, in those days, was full of fantastic stories regarding happenings in South Africa. If anyone, even a child, was missing from his house, people believed that he must have been spirited out of India as an indentured labourer. Gandhiji was then known as 'Karmavir Gandhi'.

It was in the summer of 1918, soon after I had joined St. Stephen's College, Delhi, that I had a chance to see Gandhiji. Our Principal, Shri S. K. Rudra, and his next in command, Rev. C. F. Andrews were great friends of Gandhiji. The latter had met Gandhiji in South Africa, and through him the former became a friend of the Mahatma's as well. In those early days, Gandhiji, who always stayed in the Principal's house whenever he visited the capital used to wear a Khadi Dhoti, a short Angarkha and a big Kathiawadi turban. Later on, he began to wear a Khadi cap and a shirt. The cap became known as the "Gandhi cap" and has been in fashion ever since.

During this period the first great World War was still dragging on. In India, Dr. Annie Besant had launched her Home Rule agitation. Gandhiji was engaged in Kheda Satyagraha in Gujarat. India's Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, had invited Indian leaders to a War Conference at Delhi in April. The invitees included Gandhiji, who was asked to support the resolution relating to recruitment. He seconded it in one sentence. Speaking in Hindustani, he said: "With a full sense of responsibility I beg to support the resolution." It was the first time that anyone had spoken in Hindustani at a Viceregal meeting.

Once, during Bapu's stay with Principal Rudra, a student — who was a classmate of my brother — came running to him and said that Padree Andrews had caught a villager, and was taking him to a church for conversion to Christianity. The boy could hardly believe it when he was told that the villager was no other than Gandhiji himself!

The Mahatma's first book *My Jail Experiences* came into my hands when I was still a schoolboy. Reading it, I got glimpses of his early struggle and his hard life in different jails of South Africa; I was at once attracted by his magnetic and powerful personality noticeable even in his book. To meet and to work with or for him became my burning desire. And yet, my courage failed me when I saw Gandhiji for the first time in my Principal's house. I could not muster the necessary courage to go near him.

Gandhiji used to take goat's milk. Rudra had a Muslim bearer named Mohammed. I made friends with Mohammed, and through him I was first enlisted in this great man's service, with the job of fetching goat's milk for him. This I was happy to do, for, is it not said, "They also serve who only stand and wait?"

The thirty-third session of the Indian National Congress was held in Delhi in December 1918. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was the session's President and a mounted bodyguard was arranged in his honour. I enlisted myself as a volunteer in the corps. The session was held at Patharwala grounds, in front of the Red Fort, where the Lajpat Rai market is situated at present. The President, while entering his camp one day, asked the Gujarat delegates whether Mohandas had come? "No Sir. He has been taken ill. He is suffering from acute dysentery," was someone's reply.

Malaviyaji was, at that time, amongst India's foremost leaders. Though the common man called Gandhiji the Mahatma, his colleagues, such as Malaviyaji still addressed him by his name. Later on, he became Bapu to many of us.

Having pledged his support to the Government, Gandhiji on his return from Delhi plunged into the

recruiting campaign in Kheda. In his enthusiasm, he could hardly give sufficient attention to his food, and, in consequence, nearly ruined his constitution. He had a severe attack of fever and dysentery and for months together he hovered between life and death. He hardly took any medicine and he grew extremely weak. Dr. Dalal insisted that, unless he started taking milk, he would not guarantee his recovery. Gandhiji had taken a vow against drinking milk while he was in South Africa. Those were the days when he was concentrating on Brahmacharya and was imposing different sorts of restrictions upon himself for self-restraint. The first of these was the giving up of milk. This is what he says about this vow in his *Experiments with Truth* :

"It was from Raychandbhai that I first learnt that milk stimulated animal passion. Books on vegetarianism strengthened the idea, but so long as I had not taken the Brahmacharya vow, I could not make up my mind to forego milk. I had long realized that milk was not necessary for supporting the body, but it was not easy to give it up. While the necessity for avoiding milk in the interests of self-restraint was growing upon me I happened to come across some literature from Calcutta describing the tortures to which cows and buffaloes were subjected by their keepers (N. B. in order to extract the last drop of milk from these poor animals). This had a wonderful effect on me. I discussed it with Mr Kallenbach....He said, 'We constantly talk about the harmful effects of milk. Why then do we not give it up? It is certainly not necessary.' I was agreeably surprised at the suggestion which I warmly welcomed, and both of us pledged ourselves to abjure milk then and there. This was at Tolstoy Farm in the year 1912."

He would not therefore agree to Dr. Dalal's insistence on his taking milk. Kasturba told him one day that while taking the vow against milk he had only cow's milk in mind, and should not therefore have compunction in taking goat's

milk, which he did from that day onwards. In 1918 an operation for fissures was performed on him. It was during his convalescence that he had his first spinning lessons.

The first World War came to an end in November 1918. In order to tighten the British chains of slavery round India, the Rowlatt Bill was introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council in the Winter Session of 1919. For the first time in his life, Gandhiji watched the proceedings of the then Imperial Legislative Council from the galleries during the Rowlatt Bill debates, and he was the first person to realize the evil consequences of this Act. He thought of launching an agitation against it. Till then he had not actively participated in Indian politics. He convened a small meeting at his Sabarmati Ashram on February 28, and drafted a Satyagraha pledge which was signed by all present. He notified his intention of facing the situation with a campaign of Satyagraha, and undertook a tour of the country to educate the people and to arouse them against the Rowlatt Bill. The same year he took charge of the English weekly *Young India* and the Gujarati weekly *Navajivan*, which were both run by *The Bombay Chronicle* and which was put under censorship at that time.

During his country-wide tour, he came to Delhi where a mass meeting, to protest against the Bill, was organized at Patharwala grounds. It was the first meeting I attended where I heard Gandhiji speak. I was standing near the platform in a corner, when I had an intense desire to touch his feet. I saw him advancing towards the platform. Gathering together my courage I rushed towards him, touched his holy feet, and put their dust on my forehead.

Overwhelming enthusiasm to follow in the footsteps of this great leader resulted in the entire country opposing the Bill. Thus was ushered in the dawn of the Gandhian Era, leaving behind the old era of slavery under the British Raj. Day and night the atmosphere resounded with 'Gandhijiki jai'. If, perchance one awoke from his sleep at the dead of night, one would hear the same

cry of 'Gandhijiki jai'. A word uttered from his mouth was considered a Holy Command which nobody could defy.

The Rowlatt Bill became an Act on March 18, 1919. This was subsequently called the 'Black Act'. Gandhiji was touring South India at that time and was discussing plans to fight the Act. The following day he suggested to Shri Rajagopalachari that they should call upon the country to observe a general *hartal*. "The idea came to me last night in a dream," he said. It was accordingly announced that general *hartal* would be observed throughout the country on March 30, and that it would commence with an act of self-purification. Prayers were to be offered and a 24-hour fast observed by everyone. Later on, this date was changed to April 6, but the intimation of this last-minute change could not reach Delhi in time. Delhi therefore observed two *hartals*, one on March 30, and the other on April 6. Delhi had never lagged behind other big cities in the struggle for freedom but at that time it touched the high watermark of political activity. Those were the days of Hakim Ajmal Khan and Swami Shraddhanand. A wave of enthusiasm swept over the city. Those whose memory is still fresh with the happenings of March 30, cherish the Hindu-Muslim unity of those days, when both the communities stood as one and cemented their union with the blood of patriots whom British guns mowed down in the streets of Delhi.

People had never witnessed such a complete *hartal* as on that day. They, literally, did not light their hearths for full 72 hours. There was no police rule for 17 whole days. Yet very few thefts occurred in the entire city during this period. Swami Shraddhanand was invited to deliver a speech in the Juma Masjid, which he did from the pulpit. It was the first, and, so far, the last occasion when a non-Muslim was welcomed to speak from the pulpit of the Juma Masjid. The situation had become so tense that both Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb and Swami Shraddhanand were called to the Town Hall by the Deputy Commissioner and asked to persuade the people to open their shops. I vividly recollect that day when thousands of people were standing

around the Clock Tower in Chandni Chowk and were demanding the return of their leaders, as it was rumoured that an aeroplane had been arranged to deport them from India. The mob could only be pacified, when they saw their leaders coming out from the Town Hall.

In their patriotic fervour, people were itching for a trial of strength with the bureaucracy. In the Punjab people who were prepared to sacrifice their lives for Gandhiji, were getting out of control. On receiving an urgent call from Dr. Satyapal and Swami Shraddhanand, Gandhiji who was then in Bombay, started for Amritsar on the night of April 8 to pacify the people. As he had to pass through Delhi, thousands of people assembled at the Sadar Railway Station to welcome him. When the train steamed in, only Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji's secretary, got down from the compartment and conveyed the news of Gandhiji's arrest at Palwal Station. A notice had been served on him not to enter the Punjab. He had refused to obey the notice and was arrested. On hearing this news, people were stunned, but instead of being disheartened, they became more determined and emboldened to fight for their freedom.

Disturbances in Ahmedabad, Viramgam and Nadiad followed Gandhiji's arrest. Gandhiji was taken back to Bombay and released on April 10. He immediately left for Ahmedabad to restore order, and suspended the contemplated Satyagraha Movement on account of the disturbances. He fasted for three days from April 13th to 16th, 1919 — as a penance for the violence committed by the people. He, however, could not avert the Punjab tragedy. On April 13, the Hindu New Year Day, General Dyer ordered his men to fire on a crowd which had assembled at Jalianwala Bagh, Amritsar, killing 400 persons, including children, and wounding over 2,000. Martial Law was declared throughout the Punjab and heinous crimes were committed on the people. This included public flogging and crawling on their bellies.

The Government as well as the Congress appointed committees of enquiry. The Hunter Committee started

functioning in Delhi and Gandhiji had to come to Delhi in that connection. I used to attend the proceedings of this Committee and watch him from a distance. This Committee was ultimately boycotted by the Congress which appointed a Committee of Enquiry of its own under the Chairmanship of Gandhiji.

Gandhiji, at last, was permitted — in the month of October — to proceed to the Punjab, where he came into intimate contact with the people of the Province. He attended the Congress Session at Amritsar in December. Gandhiji had not become a Non-co-operator then. He was in favour of working the new Constitutional Reforms called the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms and moved a resolution to that effect in the open session. A resolution to welcome the Prince of Wales was also adopted.

A few months later the position entirely changed and Gandhiji became a Non-co-operator. This was due to the British betrayal of their promises to the Indian Muslims regarding the Khilafat question and the outcome of the Hunter Committee report which was published in May. Gandhiji was intensely shocked to read the Committee's conclusions. He withdrew his co-operation from the Government from then on and launched the Non-co-operation Movement on August 1st. The Khilafat Movement was also started side by side in which Gandhiji played a prominent part. He came to Delhi and led a deputation to the Viceroy in connection with it.

Gandhiji and Hakim Ajmal Khan had become great friends. Hakim Saheb's residence in Ballimaran had become the rendezvous for all the political leaders in Delhi. The Congress Working Committee and the Khilafat Committee meetings were also held there and were invariably attended by Gandhiji. Later on, Gandhiji started staying at Dr. Ansari's residence in Darya Ganj, as he felt that Principal Rudra's intimate association with him and his giving him shelter under his roof might compromise him and expose his college to unnecessary risk. I used to take goat's milk to the Doctor's place also

whenever Gandhiji came to Delhi. Doctorsaheb would call me 'Gandhiji's Gwala' (milkman) in great affection and love.

I would hover about Gandhiji, and sit in his room; and received his signed photograph but I still could not muster enough courage to talk to him. In 1920 Gandhiji promised to get us Swaraj within a year, provided his six specific conditions were fully implemented by the people. They were: (1) Cultivation of the spirit of non-violence, (2) Setting up Congress organization in every village, (3) Introduction of the spinning wheel in every home to spin enough yarn for meeting its full requirements of cloth, (4) Collection of money for Congress work, (5) Promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity and (6) Removal of the curse of untouchability.

A special session of the Congress was held at Calcutta in September 1920 where Gandhiji's Non-violent Non-co-operation programme was approved and the same was finally adopted at the Nagpur session in December. The programme included (a) the surrender of titles, (b) boycott of official functions, (c) boycott of Government-aided educational institutions, (d) boycott of law courts, (e) boycott of Legislatures, (f) boycott of foreign cloth, (g) boycott of Government civil and military services and (h) non-payment of taxes.

Gandhiji made an extensive tour of the country and preached his cult of non-violent non-co-operation to the people who were groaning under the tyranny of the British rule. Within a year, the Non-co-operation Movement was in full swing. In the month of July 1921, Gandhiji approved of the burning of foreign clothes. A huge bonfire of foreign clothes was made in Gandhiji's presence on August 1, in Elphinstone Mill compound at Bombay which I witnessed from a distance. Hundreds of solar hats were flung into the fire.

As the year within which Gandhiji had promised to bring Swaraj was fast approaching its end, he was making brisk preparations for mass civil disobedience and non-payment of taxes. Meanwhile all the prominent leaders were

put behind bars, and volunteers were being arrested in thousands.

One incident, however, completely changed Gandhiji's plan. The Prince of Wales was visiting India at that time. The Congress had advocated boycott of his visit. He arrived in Bombay on November 17, 1921, when rioting broke out resulting in bloodshed in the city. Gandhiji had to resort to a fast to stop bloodshed. He refused to eat or drink till peace was completely restored. The fast was broken after five days on the 22nd November when the situation had become normal. Observing that the people had not yet assimilated the spirit of non-violence, Gandhiji gave up — for the time being — the idea of starting mass civil disobedience.

I, also, gave up my studies, took to the spinning wheel, burnt my foreign clothes at one of the bonfires at Chowpatty, Bombay, which was presided over by Maulana Mohammed Ali, and took to wearing Khadi. When I stepped out of my house into the bazar with Chapals on for the first time, I felt as if every passer-by was looking at me. By now I had become a regular reader of Gandhiji's two weeklies, *Young India* and *Navajivan* and was trying to follow his instructions in every way. At last, one day, I took courage into my hands and wrote my first letter to Gandhiji in my blood. I never inquired of him whether he ever received that letter or not.

In December, I attended the annual session of the Congress at Ahmedabad and watched Gandhiji working from close quarters. Although I had attended two other sessions previously, this one was unique in many ways, as Gandhiji was appointed at this time the sole Executive Authority of the Congress.

In pursuance of the civil disobedience resolution adopted at the Ahmedabad Congress Session on February 2, 1922, Gandhiji intimated to the Viceroy, Lord Reading, his intention to start civil disobedience in Bardoli and was busy leading the non-tax campaign in Gujarat,

without giving himself a moment's rest. I always wondered how he managed to handle so much work.

One day, when I returned home from my evening stroll *Young India* of February 16 came into my hands. I was shocked to read that owing to the Chauri Chaura incident, Gandhiji had suspended the civil disobedience movement. I felt a fainting sensation and with a heavy heart I sank into my seat. Later on, I learnt that on February 5th when a Congress procession was parading in Chauri Chaura, near Gorakhpur, 21 constables and a sub-inspector were thrown inside the police station by a mob which then set fire to it. They were all burnt alive.

A meeting of the Working Committee met at Bardoli on 22nd February and after considering the situation at Bombay, Madras and Chauri Chaura, decided to suspend the mass civil disobedience. Gandhiji writing in *Young India* said :

" God has been abundantly kind to me. He has warned me the third time that there is not, as yet, in India that truthful and non-violent atmosphere which alone can justify mass disobedience which can be described, at the same time, as 'civil' denoting gentle, truthful, humble, knowing, wilful yet loving, never criminal and hateful." (*Young India*, 16-2-'22, p. 102)

" Suspension of mass civil disobedience and subsidence of excitement are necessary for further progress; indeed, indispensable in preventing further retrogression. I hope, therefore, that by suspension every Congressman or woman will not only not feel disappointed but he or she will feel relieved of the burden of unreality and national sin." (*Young India*, 16-2-'22, p. 103)

Gandhiji imposed upon himself five days' continuous fast from 12th to 17th February, 1922, permitting himself only water in order " to become a fitter instrument to register the slightest variation in the moral atmosphere about him." (*Young India*, 16-2-'22, p. 103)

In the same month (February, 1922) the A. I. C. C. met at Delhi and Gandhiji was severely criticized for suspen-

ding the movement and a vote of censure was moved against him but was lost by a vast majority vote.

It was now the turn of the Government, which had been so far watching his activities, to act. Gandhiji in his turn, was also prepared for all eventualities, and was awaiting his arrest any moment. He gave instructions on March 9, through *Young India*, regarding what was to be done after he had been arrested. The very next day, on March 10, at about 10-30 p.m. Gandhiji was arrested in his Sabarmati Ashram for creating disaffection towards the Government. The Commissioner of Police, who had come to arrest him gave him sufficient time to get ready. After reciting his favourite hymn *Vaishnav Jana*, all the members of the Ashram did their obeisance to him and received his blessings. His parting words were "Work hard and untiringly."

The historic trial began on March 18 at Ahmedabad. Several questions were put to Gandhiji which he replied as follows :

| | |
|---|---|
| Age ? | Fifty three |
| Caste ? | Hindu Bania |
| Occupation ? | Farmer and Weaver |

Bapuji pleaded guilty to the charge and before making his statement addressed the Judge in the following words :

"I knew I was playing with fire. I ran the risk, and if I were set free, I would still do the same. I would be failing in my duty if I did not do so. It is the last article of my faith. But I had to make my choice. I had either to submit to a system which I considered had done irreparable harm to my country, or to incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth when they understood the truth from my lips. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad. I am deeply sorry for it and I am therefore here to submit not to light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for mercy. I do not plead any extenuating act. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law, is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open

to you, Mr Judge, is, as I am just going to say in my statement, either to resign your post, or to inflict upon me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and law you are assisting to administer are good for the people. I do not expect that kind of conversion. But by the time I have finished with my statement you will, perhaps, have a glimpse of what is raging within my breast to run this maddest risk which a sane man can run." (*Young India*, 23-3-'22, pp. 166-67)

On the analogy of Lokamanya Tilak, Gandhiji was awarded six years' imprisonment by Justice Broomfield and was sent to Yeravda Jail at Poona. The 18th of every month thereafter was observed as 'Gandhi Day' when people fasted and prayed.

I attended the Gaya Congress in December, 1922. Gandhiji was still in prison and in his absence the question of entry into legislatures, was hotly discussed in the country. The Congress was divided into two sections "Changers" and "No-changers".

Hindu-Muslim unity, which had been the sheet-anchor for Gandhiji for the attainment of Swaraj, was threatened by several communal riots in 1923. In September, a Special Session of the Congress was held at Delhi, which permitted Congressmen to enter the legislatures. This resolution was finally endorsed at the annual session at Kakinada. Thus the Swaraj Party was born.

Gandhiji was suddenly taken ill in jail and was removed to the Sassoon Hospital, where on January 24, 1924, Col. Meddock operated upon him for appendicitis. Owing to his weak state of health, he was unconditionally released on February 5. He had grown weak and went to Juhu, a seaside resort close to Bombay city to recoup his health. I went there to have his Darshan. Gandhiji used to go for a walk on the beach every evening. One evening, as he came out for walk with Mr C. F. Andrews whom I had known from my college days, I touched his feet, offered my greetings and returned to my residence. My courage failed me again, and I could not talk to him though I longed to do so.

Thus, I passed six long years in following Gandhiji about. Perhaps, looking at my heart's earnestness, God took pity on me and gave me an opportunity to serve the Mahatma permanently. It happened in July 1924 and in this manner. Great changes had come over the country during the last two years of that period. Everywhere Hindu-Muslim unity was disturbed by communal strife. News poured in regarding such riots from all parts of the country. Delhi suffered from this mad frenzy. The Mopla tragedy in South India and the Kohat tragedy in N. W. F. Province had recently taken place. Gandhiji had come to Delhi in order to proceed to Kohat, and was staying with Maulana Mohammed Ali at Kucha Chelan. He was collecting clothes for the Moplas. I also collected a bundle of old clothes from my mother and took it to Maulana Saheb's residence.

On one side of the first floor was Maulana's office of his weekly journal *Comrade*, and on the other side the rooms allotted to Gandhiji. When I reached a shed on the upper floor, by a staircase, I was taken to a young man of about my age and was introduced to him, "This is Devadas Gandhi, the Mahatma's son." He was spinning on a Takli. I entrusted the cloth bundle to him, and conversed awhile. He introduced me to Shri Mahadev Desai. Now I became a regular visitor to that house and our mere acquaintance developed into friendship. One day I invited both of them to dinner. Even then I did not have the courage to go to Gandhiji and talk to him.

At last the auspicious moment arrived when Mahadevbhai took me to Bapuji and introduced me to him. My desire of several years was fulfilled and I was overcome with joy for I was tied to him with a cord of affection from that moment onwards.

## II

## AN OBJECT OF COMPASSION

After spending a few days in Delhi, Gandhiji left for Kohat, from where he returned in September, 1924 and stayed with Maulana Mohammed Ali as was frequently his custom. Apart from my long-standing desire to get acquainted with Bapuji, I ardently wished to invite him to dine with us at my home.

I expressed this hope to Mahadevbhai one day, and asked him, "Does Gandhiji ever partake of meals at people's houses?" And when he replied in the affirmative, I was overwhelmed with joy. Mahadevbhai then took me to the great man, but I did not have sufficient courage to open my lips and invite him myself. So Mahadevbhai invited him on my behalf, and the Mahatma graciously accepted, and it was forthwith settled that he would dine with us the next night, i.e. September 18, 1924.

I could not have had better luck. I felt elated. How would I break this happy news to my people; how would I welcome my distinguished guest to my place; what food should I serve; how would he pass the narrow lanes and crowded roads to reach my house? — all these thoughts crossed and recrossed my mind as I was going home. Upon arrival, I broke the news of the Mahatma's coming, and the whole house was filled with joy. I engaged myself in the pleasant task of preparing for the happy occasion.

But as the adage goes, "Man proposes, God disposes." Early next morning I received a telephone call, and Mahadevbhai spoke in a trembling voice, "Did you hear it, Brij Krishna?" he asked.

"What?" I asked in great excitement.

"Bapu has gone on a 21 days' fast," was the reply.

The news came as a bolt from the blue and I was completely stunned. Instead of sharing my meal, he was going on a long fast lasting three whole weeks. My long cherished desire that Gandhiji would one day grace my

house by taking his meals with me, having come so near fulfilment, was frustrated. I was dejected to hear that he would pass 21 days without food, thus depriving me of his company even during the meal hours. Feeling most unhappy and remorseful, I reached Maulana's residence. Mahadevbhai narrated the whole story to me and took me to Gandhiji. He was laughing as usual as if nothing had happened. " I am ready to come to your house, but I won't take food today ", he said. " Do you want me to go there today or on the completion of the fast ? "

I said, " It is better if I take you when you have completed your fast. What is the use of troubling you today ? " He agreed with me.

The following statement was issued by Bapu on Wednesday, September 18 at Delhi announcing his 21 days' fast :

" The recent events have proved unbearable for me. My helplessness is still more unbearable. My religion teaches me that whenever there is distress which one cannot remove, one must fast and pray. I have done so in connection with my own dearest ones. Nothing evidently that I say or write can bring the two communities together. I am therefore imposing on myself a fast of 21 days commencing from today and ending on October 9. I reserve the liberty to drink water with or without salt. It is both a penance and a prayer.

" As penance I need not have taken the public into my confidence, but I publish the fast as (let me hope) an effective prayer both to Hindus and Mussalmans, who have hitherto worked in unison not to commit suicide. I respectfully invite the heads of all the communities, including Englishmen, to meet and end this quarrel which is a disgrace to religion and to humanity. It seems as if God has been dethroned. Let us reinstate Him in our hearts." (*Mahatma*, Vol. 2, p. 196)

This long fast of Gandhiji's was a cause of pain and anxiety to the people, while for me it provided an opportunity to get to know him better. The news of the fast

spread all over the country like wild fire and a Unity Conference of leaders of all the religions was convened in Delhi by Maulana Mohammed Ali, the then Congress President. In response, representatives of different communities as well as Congress leaders began to pour in. Though Maulana Saheb's house was big enough, his two weeklies *Hamdard* and *Comrade* were also located in that building and there was not enough space to accommodate all the leaders. I offered my residence at Katra Khushhal Rai, of Chandni Chowk which was big enough, for Gandhiji's special guests to stay. Devadasji had gone to Sabarmati Ashram and Ramdasbhai had taken his place. It was left to Mahadevbhai to suggest the persons who were to be lodged with me, and I would arrange for their accommodation. Three of us, Mahadevbhai, Ramdasbhai and I went almost daily for several days to the Delhi Railway junction to receive the Mahatma's special guests and take them to my house. About twenty-five to thirty guests were accommodated at my place. Thus I had the proud privilege of serving such distinguished personalities as Shri Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Patel, Shri Rajagopalachari, Shri Shankarlal Bankar, Dinabandhu C. F. Andrews, Shri Polak, Shrimati Saraladevi Chaudhrani, and others.

The Unity Conference met at the Sangam Theatre, now called the Jagat Talkies, at Machhliwalan on September 26, and a resolution was adopted urging Gandhiji to break his fast. Gandhiji showed his inability to comply with its wishes as he felt that "a promise once made, or a vow once taken for a worthy object, should not be broken."

Bapu spent the first week of the fast at Maulana Saheb's residence. I used to take him for a drive every evening in my car. Pujya Kasturba came to my house every day for her bath as she found it more convenient.

In the second week, Gandhiji began to grow weaker. Also, he was not having sufficient rest, though Maulana Saheb was doing everything humanly possible to make him as comfortable as possible. Drs. M. A. Ansari and Abdur Rehman, together with Dr. Jivraj Mehta were his medical attendants, while Shri C. F. Andrews nursed him. It was

thought advisable to shift him to some quiet place outside the city. Accordingly he was removed to Dilkhush, Rai Bahadur Sultan Singh's bungalow in Sabzimandi. Morning and evening prayers were held there and during the day Pandit M. M. Malaviya recited passages from the Bhagavadgita.

It was a solemn vow of Gandhiji to spin for some time daily without fail. He did not give up this practice even during his fast though he had grown very weak and could hardly sit without support. Pillows were kept around him when he carried on his daily routine. He broke his fast on the 21st day, after he had done his spinning.

Bapu had unbounded faith in God, and it was his firm belief that if He had work for him to do, the fast would end peacefully without any untoward incident.

Dr. Ansari examined him thoroughly every day and had his urine tested. Gandhiji had promised Dr. Ansari that if ever there was danger to his life, he would begin at once to take food, as he did not wish to kill himself. Later, Dr. Ansari examined him several times during the day, and one day he felt that the danger point was near at hand and he informed Gandhiji of his anxiety. Next day he warned him that no further risk could be taken, and asked him to start on solid food immediately. Gandhiji enquired, "Have you considered all points? Have you formed this opinion after examining everything? Even then, are you of the same opinion? But your knowledge may be lacking in one thing and that is 'prayer'. Leave me alone for one day more. If you observe the same symptoms tomorrow also, I shall fulfil my promise and shall take my food."

The next morning when Dr. Ansari examined him, he found that a miracle had happened. All those symptoms which were worrying his mind the previous day had disappeared and he wondered how it had happened! He described this marvellous occurrence to all his friends.

The day previous to his breaking the fast, Gandhiji dictated the following message:

"Today is the twentieth day of my penance and prayer. Presently from the world of peace, I shall enter the world of strife. The more I think of it, the more helpless I feel. So many look to me to finish the work begun by the Unity Conference. So many expect me to bring together the political parties. I know that I can do nothing. God can do everything. Oh God, make me Thy fit instrument and use me as Thou wilt.

"Man is nothing. Napoleon planned much and found himself a prisoner in St. Helena. The mighty Kaiser aimed at the crown of Europe, and was reduced to the state of a private gentleman. God had so willed it. Let us contemplate such examples and be humble.

"During these days of grace, privilege and peace, I have hummed to myself a hymn we often sing at the Satyagraha Ashram. It is so good that I cannot resist the pleasure of sharing a free rendering of it with the reader. The words of the hymn better express my state than anything else I can write. Here they are:

"My honour, O God is in Thy keeping;
Thou art ever my Refuge,
For Thou art Protector of the weak.
It is Thy promise to listen to the wail of sinners.
I am a sinner of old, help me
Thou to cross this ocean of darkness.
It is Thine to remove the sin
And the misery of mankind,
Be gracious to Tulsidas
And make him Thy devotee."

(*Young India*, 6-10-'24, p. 329)

Thus by the grace of God, those twenty-one memorable days of penance and prayer passed off peacefully, and the solemn pledge which was taken on September 18, 1924 with God as witness was broken on midday of October 9. C. F. Andrews' account of how the fast was broken is given below:

"The Doctors were called first by themselves, and he gave them the most touching words of thanks for all their love and devotion to him. Then Hakim Ajmal Khan Saheb

who had cheered and helped him through his fast both as a doctor and as a friend ; Maulana Mohammed Ali, his most tender and loving host followed next, and without any further order, all went quietly into his room and greeted him with affection and sat down. The ladies who were present sat near the bed. Swami Shraddhanand sat at the foot of the bed with his eyes closed in prayer. Pandit Motilal Nehru, Deshbandhu C. R. Das, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Ali Brothers — all were seated round the bed with many others.

" The Imam Saheb, who had been his closest companion in South Africa and at Sabarmati Ashram, recited the wonderful Arabic opening words of the Koran, chanting its majestic language, which tells of God the most Compassionate, and the most Merciful, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and the Helper of mankind. It ends with the prayer for His help to tread the path of righteousness and not that of sinners. After this, as had been arranged, the Christian hymn was sung. Then followed some very beautiful passages from the Upanishads, which were recited by Vinoba. Three of the Slokas may be translated thus :

' Those alone can realize the Divine Light within, who have purified themselves through the constant practice of truth, self-discipline, meditation and continence.

' By ceaseless pursuit of truth, the Rishis of old attained their goal, even the Supreme Truth.

' Let not my words belie my thoughts, nor my thoughts belie my words. Let the Divine Light always shine before me. Let not my knowledge fail me. I shall always say what is right and speak the truth.'

" After ' Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti ', had been chanted with the deepest reverence, Balkrishna sang the song of the True Vaishnava — ' He is the true Vaishnava who knows and feels another's woes as his own. Ever ready to serve, he never boasts. He bows to every one and despises no one, keeping his thought, word and deed pure. Blessed is the mother of such a one. He reverences every woman as his mother. He keeps an open mind and does not stain

his lips with falsehood, nor does he touch another's wealth. No bonds of attachment can hold him. Ever in tune with Ramanama, his body possesses in itself all the places of pilgrimage. Free from greed and deceit, passion and anger, this is the true Vaishnava.'

"Before actually breaking the fast, Mahatma Gandhi turned to Maulana Mohammed Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and spoke to them ; he was emotionally so stirred that in his bodily weakness his voice could hardly be heard except by those who were nearest to him. He told them how for thirty years Hindu-Muslim unity had been his chief concern, and he had not yet succeeded in achieving it. He did not know what the will of God was, but on this day he would beseech them to promise to lay down their lives if necessary for the cause. Hindus must be quite free to offer worship in their temples, and, in like manner the Mussalmans must be able to say their Azan and prayers with perfect freedom in their mosques. If this elementary freedom of worship could not everywhere be secured, then neither Hinduism nor Islam had any meaning.

"Hakim Ajmal Khan and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad renewed their solemn pledge and promise on behalf of the Muslim community.

"Then Dr. Ansari brought forward some orange juice and Mahatma Gandhi sipped it. Thus was the fast broken. The joy and thankfulness of those who were present cannot adequately be described. Throughout it all, as congratulations poured in upon him, Bapuji remained unmoved, quietly resting. Soon, the room was emptied of people. Mahatma Gandhi remained silent and the great ordeal of breaking the fast was over." (*Young India*, 16-10-'24, pp. 343-44)

Gandhiji gradually regained strength and he began his daily walks. In the evening, he used to go for a walk to the Ridge Road, close to the Hanging Gardens, Malabar Hill, a cool and shady place near his residence. One day, when he had regained sufficient strength I reminded him of his promise to visit my place and dine with us. A date was

fixed in early November. It was decided that Pujya Ba and Gandhiji's other companions would proceed straight to my house, while the Mahatma, together with Hakim Saheb and Maulana Saheb, would accompany me after their evening walk. I reached Ridge Road in my car at the appointed hour and took them to my residence, passing through narrow lanes lined with people standing in rows awaiting an opportunity of catching a glimpse of their famous (and notorious !) patriot, and thus satisfying their great curiosity ! He entered my humble dwelling, sat in a chair and partook of food which consisted of fruits and goat's milk. In those days he had made a vow to finish his last meal before sunset. As it grew dark, I worried lest he should stop in the middle of his dinner. His many companions also were served with light refreshments. Not only the entire house, but also the street, was full of people who had gathered there after they had heard that the greatest man of India had come to our home. With the utmost difficulty he returned to his residence. While he was preparing to leave, he lifted Maulana Mohammed Ali's shoes for which the Maulana was searching in vain and placed them before him. I was simply flabbergasted at the sight of this spectacle. How could he, the dust of whose feet millions were desirous of placing upon their foreheads, stoop to lift another's shoes in this way ? But therein lay his greatness. He had won everybody by his utter humility.

It was the day of days for me ! The desire which I had cherished in my heart for years was finally fulfilled ! From then onwards, whenever Gandhiji visited Delhi, he occasionally graced my abode with his presence till the death of my mother in 1938.

One day, while staying at Dilkhush, Shri Andrews introduced one of his pupils, Ramachandran, to Gandhiji, and an interesting conversation took place between the two, which I reproduce here, as was taken down by Shri Mahadev Desai. It illustrates Gandhiji's ideas about Art, Machinery and Marriage.

" How is it," asked Ramachandran, " that many intelligent and eminent men, who love and admire you, hold that

you have consciously or unconsciously, ruled out of the scheme of national regeneration all considerations of Art ?" "I am sorry", replied Gandhiji, "that in this matter I have been generally misunderstood. There are two aspects of things — the outward and the inward. It is purely a matter of emphasis with me. The outward has no meaning except in so far as it helps the inward. All true Art is thus the expression of the soul. The outward forms have value only in so far as they are the expression of the inner spirit of man."

Ramachandran hesitatingly suggested: "The great artists themselves have declared, that Art is the translation of the urge and unrest in the soul of the artist into words, colours, shapes etc." "Yes", said Gandhiji, "Art of that nature has the greatest possible appeal for me. But I know that many call themselves artists, and are recognized as such, and yet in their works there is absolutely no trace of the soul's upward urge and unrest."

"Have you any instance in mind ?" "Yes," said Gandhiji, "take Oscar Wilde. I can speak of him, as I was in England at the time that he was being much discussed and talked about."

"I have been told," put in Ramachandran, "that Oscar Wilde was one of the greatest literary artists of modern times."

"Yes, that is just my trouble. Wilde saw the highest Art simply in outward forms and therefore succeeded in beautifying immorality. All true Art must help the soul to realize its inner self. In my own case, I find that I can do entirely without external forms in my soul's realization. I can claim, therefore, that there is truly sufficient Art in my life, though you might not see what you call works of Art about me. My room may have blank walls ; and I may even dispense with the roof, so that I may gaze out upon the starry heavens overhead that stretch in an unbending expanse of beauty. What conscious Art of man can give me the panoramic scenes that open out before me, when I look up to the sky above with all its shining stars ? This, however, does not mean that I refuse to accept the value

of productions of Art, generally accepted as such, but only that I personally feel how inadequate these are compared with the eternal symbols of beauty in Nature. These productions of man's Art have their value only so far as they help the soul onward towards self-realization."

" But the artists claim to see and to find Truth through outward beauty ", continued Ramachandran. " Is it possible to see and find Truth in that way ? "

" I would reverse the order ", Gandhiji immediately answered. " I see and find beauty in Truth or through Truth. All Truths, not merely true ideas, but truthful faces, truthful pictures, or songs, are highly beautiful. People generally fail to see Beauty in Truth, the ordinary man runs away from it and becomes blind to the Beauty in it. Whenever men begin to see Beauty in Truth, then true Art will arise."

Ramachandran then asked, ' But cannot Beauty be separated from Truth and Truth from Beauty ? "

" I should want to know exactly what Beauty is ", Gandhiji replied. " If it is what people generally understand by that word, then they are wide apart. Is a woman with fair features necessarily beautiful ? " " Yes ", replied Ramachandran without thinking.

" Even ", asked Bapu, continuing his question, " if she may be of an ugly character ? "

Ramachandran hesitated. Then he said, " But her face in that case cannot be beautiful. It will always be the index of the soul within. The true artist with the genius of perception will produce the right expression."

" But here you are begging the whole question ", Gandhiji replied. " You now admit that mere outward form may not make a thing beautiful. To a true artist only that face is beautiful which, quite apart from its exterior, shines with the Truth within the soul. There is then, as I have said, no Beauty apart from Truth. On the other hand, Truth may manifest itself in forms which may not be outwardly beautiful at all. Socrates, we are told, was the most truthful man of his time and yet his features are said to have been the ugliest in Greece. To my mind, he was

beautiful, because all his life was a striving after Truth, and you may remember that his outward form did not prevent Phidias from appreciating the beauty of Truth in him, though as an artist he was accustomed to see Beauty in outward forms also."

"But Bapuji", said Ramachandran eagerly "the most beautiful things have often been created by men whose own lives were not beautiful."

"That", said Gandhiji, "only means that Truth and untruth often co-exist; good and evil are often found together. In an artist also not seldom the right perception of things and the wrong co-exist. Truly beautiful creations come when right perception is at work. If these moments are rare in life they are also rare in Art."

All this set Ramachandran thinking hard. "If only truthful or good things can be beautiful, how can things without a moral quality be beautiful"? he said, half to himself and half aloud. Then he asked the question, "Is there truth, Bapuji, in things that are neither moral nor immoral in themselves? For instance, is there truth in a sunset or a crescent moon that shines amid the stars at night?"

"Indeed", replied Gandhiji, "these beauties are truthful, in as much as they make me think of the Creator at the back of them. How also could these be beautiful, but for the truth that is in the centre of creation? When I admire the wonder of a sunset or the beauty of the moon my soul expands in worship of the Creator. I try to see Him and His mercies in all these creations. But even the sunsets and sunrises would be mere hindrances, if they did not help me to think of Him. Anything, which is a hindrance to the flight of the soul, is a delusion and a snare; even, like the body, which often does hinder you in the path of salvation."

"I am grateful", exclaimed Ramachandran, "to hear your views on Art, and I understand and accept them. Would it not be well for you to set them down for the benefit of the younger generation in order to guide them aright?"

"That", replied Gandhiji with a smile, "I could never dream of doing for the simple reason that it would be an impertinence on my part to hold forth on Art. I am not an Art student, though these are my fundamental convictions. I do not speak or write about it, because I am conscious of my own limitations. That consciousness is my only strength. Whatever I might have been able to know in my life has proceeded more than anything else out of the realization of my own limitations. My functions are different from the artist's and I should not go out of my way to assume his position."

Ramachandran now turned to the next question. "Are you against all machinery, Bapuji?"

"How can I be", he answered, smiling at Ramachandran's naive question, "when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning wheel itself is a machine; a little tooth-pick is a machine. What I object to, is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour', till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might."

"Then, Bapuji", said Ramachandran with eagerness, "you are fighting not against machinery as such, but against its abuses which are so much in evidence today?"

"I would unhesitatingly say 'yes'; but I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be the mere instruments of greed. Then labourers will not be over-worked and machinery instead of becoming a hindrance will be a help. I am aiming, not at eradication of all machinery, but its limitation."

Ramachandran then continued, "When logically argued out, that would seem to imply that all complicated power-driven machinery should go."

"It might have to go", admitted Gandhiji, "but I must make one thing clear. The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man. For instance, I would make intelligent exceptions. Take the case of the Singer Sewing Machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented, and there is a romance about the device itself. Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and sewing with her own hands; and simply out of his love for her, he devised the sewing machine, in order to save her from unnecessary labour. He, however, saved not only her labour but also the labour of everyone who could purchase a sewing machine."

"But, in that case", said Ramachandran, "there would have to be a factory for making these Singer Sewing Machines, and it would have to contain power-driven machinery of ordinary type."

"Yes", said Bapu, smiling at Ramachandran's clever argument. "But I am Socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalized, or State-controlled. They ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive. It is an alteration in the conditions of labour that I want. This mad rush for wealth must cease, and the labourer must be assured, not only of a living wage, but a daily task that is not a mere drudgery. The machine will, under these conditions, be as much a help to the man working it as to the State, or the man who owns it. The present mad rush will cease, and the labourer will work (as I have said) under attractive and ideal conditions. This is but one of the exceptions I have in mind. The sewing machine had love at its back. The individual is the one supreme consideration. The saving of labour of the individual should be the object, and honest humanitarian consideration and not greed, the motive. Thus, for instance, I would welcome

any day a machine to straighten crooked spindles. Not that blacksmiths will cease to make spindles; they will continue to provide the spindles; but when the spindle goes wrong every spinner will have a machine of his own to get it straight. Therefore, replace greed by love and everything will come right."

Ramachandran was evidently not satisfied with this. He had understood Gandhiji to be against all machinery and he had felt that this was right too. So he wanted to go to the root of the matter. But it was getting late and he had many more questions to ask. "Don't mind losing your train", said Gandhiji, smiling. "I am prepared to satisfy you. You may ask any questions you like this morning, and it won't tire me now in the least."

His young friend had, by no means, exhausted his list of questions. The assurance from Gandhiji that he would give him full liberty that morning put him entirely at ease, and gathering courage once more he proceeded with the next question which dealt with the institution of marriage. (*Young India*, 13-11-'24, p. 377-78)

"The third question", said Ramachandran, "that I would like to ask you is whether you are against the institution of marriage."

"I shall have to answer this question at some length", said Bapu. "The aim of human life is Moksha. As a Hindu, I believe that Moksha is freedom from birth, by breaking the bonds of the flesh, by becoming one with God. Now marriage is a hindrance in the attainment of this supreme object, in as much as it only tightens the bonds of flesh. Celibacy is a great help, in as much as it enables one to lead a life of full surrender to God. What is the object generally understood of marriage, except a repetition of one's own kind? And why need you advocate marriage? It propagates itself. It requires no agency to promote its growth."

"But must you advocate celibacy and preach it to one and all?"

"Yes", said Gandhiji. Ramachandran looked perplexed. "Then you fear there will be an end of creation?

No. The extreme logical result would be, not extinction of the human species, but the transference of it to a higher plane."

"But may not an artist, or a poet, or a great genius, leave a legacy of his genius to posterity through his own children?"

"Certainly not", said Bapu, with emphasis. "He will have more disciples than he can ever have children; and through those disciples all his gifts to the world will be handed down in a way that nothing else can do. It will be the soul's marriage with the spirit; the progeny being the disciple — a sort of divine procreation. No. You must leave marriage to take care of itself. Repetition, and not growth, would be the result; for lust has come to play the most important part in marriage." (*Young India*, 20-11-'24, p. 385)

"So, Bapuji, Truth is the main thing", said Ramachandran resuming the previous day's conversation. "Beauty and Truth are not separate aspects of the same thing."

"Truth", repeated Gandhiji with greater emphasis, "is the first thing to be sought for, and Beauty and Goodness will then be added unto you. Jesus was, to my mind, a supreme artist, because he saw and expressed Truth; and so was Muhammed, the Koran being the most perfect composition in all Arabic literature at any rate, that is what scholars say. It is because both of them strove first for Truth, that the grace of expression naturally came in and yet neither Jesus nor Muhammed wrote on Art. That is the Truth and Beauty I crave for, live for, and would die for."

Ramachandran reverted to his difficulties as to Gandhiji's logical position with regard to machinery. "If you make an exception of the Singer Sewing Machine and your spindle", he said, "where would these exceptions end?"

Gandhiji replied, "Just where they cease to help the individual and encroach upon his individuality. The

machine should not be allowed to cripple the limbs of man."

"But I was not thinking just now of the practical side, Bapuji", said Ramachandran. "Ideally, would you not rule out all machinery? When you except the sewing machine, you will have to make exceptions of the bicycle, the motor car, etc. as well. Is that not so?"

"No, I won't", said Bapu, "because they do not satisfy any of the primary wants of man; for it is not the primary need of man to traverse distances with the rapidity of a motor car. The needle, on the contrary, happens to be an essential thing in life — a primary need. Ideally, however, I would rule out all machinery, even as I would reject this very body, which is not helpful to salvation, and seek the absolute liberation of the soul. From that point of view, I would reject all machinery, but machines will remain because, like the body, they are inevitable. The body itself, as I told you, is the purest piece of mechanism; but if it is a hindrance to the highest flights of the soul it has to be rejected."

"Why is it a necessary evil?" asked Ramachandran, "May not after all some artists be able to see Truth in and through Beauty?"

"Some may", replied Gandhiji, "but here too, just as everywhere, I must think in terms of the millions. And to the millions we cannot give that training to acquire a perception of Beauty, in such a way as to see Truth in it. Show them Truth first, and they will see Beauty afterwards. Orissa haunts me in my waking hours and in my dreams. Whatever can be useful to those starving millions is beautiful to my mind. Let us give today first the vital things of life and all the graces and ornaments of life will follow." (*Young India*, 20-11-'24, p. 386)

In the second week of November, Bi Amma, the mother of the Ali Brothers, died. The funeral was attended by Gandhiji. It was significant that although it was attended by the Mahatma, the attendance was not as great as it should have been. To my mind, this was due to the decrease of popularity of the Ali Brothers.

Gandhiji left for Bombay in the third week of November to attend the All-Parties Conference and the A. I. C. C. meeting. An agreement between Gandhiji and Deshbandhu C. R. Das, and Pandit Motilal was reached and the boycott of Council entry was lifted. The programme of Non-co-operation was suspended as a national programme. Mahatma Gandhi was elected the President of the forthcoming Congress Session at Belgaum for the year. Accepting the Presidentship, Mahatmaji wrote: "Though I remain a confirmed non-co-operator and civil resister, I recognize that there is no atmosphere now for non-co-operation or civil disobedience on a national scale."

Soon after Bapu's departure from Delhi, my wife suddenly died of heart failure on November 20. This incident in my life brought me closer to Gandhiji. I became an object of compassion. I have no words to express the deep love and affection which he had for me. To say the least, had he not taken me under his benevolent wing, I do not know where I would have been wandering about today. I never considered myself worthy of living near him. A struggle was always raging in my heart. My intense desire was always to live near him, but my weaknesses and shortcomings prevented me from going to him.

No sooner had Bapuji received the news of the sad demise of my wife, than he sent me a telegram of condolence, followed by a letter, in which he wrote:

"I got the news of your bereavement only yesterday evening. I have sent a telegram today. May God console you. Life and death are one and the same thing. If we realized this, death could not give us any pain. A true friend never dies. One's own wife is a friend after all. If we remember her qualities day and night, then there is no place for death. May God give you the strength to stand by the vow of marrying only one wife in this life."

Bombay, 25-11-'24

Bapu's Blessings

This was his first letter written to me in his own handwriting, and which I have preserved till today. Since then, whenever he wrote a letter to me, he would invariably ask me if I had peace of mind, and how I was keeping.

In order to overcome the shock of my wife's death I left for Belgaum in December to see Gandhiji, and stay with him for some time. He asked me to stay in his own camp. Professor Kripalani was staying next door to me. When I saw him cleaning his own commode, I was greatly surprised. Later on, when I visited the Ashram I came to know that it was a common practice with the Ashramites to clean their own lavatories, because, on principle, no sweeper or any other servant was employed by the Ashram authorities, since every inmate was expected to look after himself in all respects.

The Belgaum Session was conducted in a most business-like manner. His Presidential Address was marvellous! "Manual labour to be the qualification for franchise; reduction of military expenditure; cheapening of justice; abolition of intoxicating liquors and drugs, and revenues therefrom; reduction of civil and military salaries; redistribution of Provinces on a linguistic basis; examination of monopolies held by foreigners; guarantee of status to Chiefs without any hindrance from the Central Government; repeal of arbitrary powers, abolition of race distinction in civil and military services; and religious freedom to different denominations; administration through vernacular languages with Hindi as the national language"—all these, he pointed out should form the basis of our Swaraj. (*History of Congress*, Vol. I, p. 278)

Soon after he assumed the Presidentship of the Congress, Gandhiji undertook an extensive tour of the country which he continued throughout the year, visiting almost all the Provinces. During his speeches, he laid great stress on Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, and spinning. The Congress membership was confined only to those who contributed 2,000 yards of hand-spun yarn monthly instead of the annual subscription of annas four. For the development of spinning and weaving Khaddar, Gandhiji inaugurated the All India Spinners' Association during his Bihar tour in the month of October, 1925. He visited Delhi several times in connection with the meetings

of the Unity Conference Board. Now, he became the guest of Lala Raghubir Singh who lived in Kashmiri Gate.

That year, the Annual Session of the Congress was held at Kanpur. Shrimati Sarojini Devi was the President-elect. She was the first lady President in the history of the Congress. I also attended this session in Gandhiji's company. Gandhiji, handing over charge to the new President, decided to keep aloof from political activities for one year in order to devote his time to constructive activities.

## III

## ASHRAM LIFE

For the first time I visited the Satyagraha Ashram in the beginning of December, 1925. Gandhiji had undergone a seven-day fast from November 24 to December 1 for lapses in behaviour on the part of the young Ashramites. News of his fast disturbed me. Gandhiji had asked me on several occasions to go to the Ashram and stay with him as long as I liked. I therefore took this opportunity of experiencing the austere and rigidly disciplined life practised there.

In those days the Ashram was situated in Sabarmati. There were a large number of Ashramites, many of whom had brought their families along. Though under the same roof as Bapuji, yet they had separate independent quarters. In one unit Maganlal Gandhi resided with his family. Likewise, about twenty others lived separately with their families, while about a hundred Ashramites stayed in the Ashram hostel rooms. Each person was so engrossed in the work allotted to him that one could hardly find time for pleasant social chitchat. The Sabarmati Ashram served as a sort of laboratory for Gandhiji. People came there from all parts of India, even from foreign countries, and joined him in his experiments in Truth and Non-violence. As a matter of fact, all his activities were based on his desire to achieve Truth through Non-violence.

The Ashram's daily routine began early at four o'clock in the morning. Everybody, without any exception, got up at the stroke of the gong. After cleaning and washing, every inmate was expected to join in the morning prayers which began punctually at 4-20. Bapuji sat in the middle, while on one side sat women and children, and in front and on the other side sat the male members. Everybody was asked to sit in an erect posture. If one began to doze, Bapuji promptly asked him to stand up and pray. Thus, nobody was allowed to become lazy or inattentive. Quotations from Buddhist, Muslim and Parsi Scriptures were not included in the prayers at that time, but were included much later.

In 1935, a Japanese, whom Gandhiji called Keshav joined the Maganwadi Ashram. He bowed to the Mahatma before prayers began and beating a drum, he would thrice intone "Namyo Ho, Rango Kyo" meaning thereby, "I bow to the Buddha, the giver of true religion". When prayers were over, he would walk around the village while chanting the above Mantra to the beat of the drum. When Japan joined the Germans during the second World War in 1939 the British Government interned him. After reciting his favourite Mantra Keshav sorrowfully took leave of Bapu and left his drum behind him as a memento. "You are leaving us, but your Mantra will remain an integral part of our Ashram prayer", said Gandhiji. Since then, the morning and evening prayer at the Ashram commenced with reciting the above Mantra.

Likewise, Bibi Reihana Tyabji came to stay for a few days at the Sevagram Ashram. She is an accomplished singer with a repertory of a variety of Bhajans. She sang as well as recited verses daily in her melodious voice from the Koran. Reihana went away when her visit came to an end but the well-known "Al Fateha" was also included in the evening Ashram worship. The following is its translation :

"In order to escape from the evil one, I seek refuge in God. O God, I begin every task with the remembrance of

Thy name. Thou art the Creator of the Universe, Thou art Lord and Master. I praise Thee alone and desire only Thy help. Thou wilt mete out justice on the day of judgement.

"Show me the right path, the path which Thy saints have trod. Not the wrong path of those who have offended Thee.

"God is One; He is Eternal, All-powerful, Uncreated. There is no other like Him. He has created all things, none has created Him."

Dr. Gilder was interned together with Gandhiji in 1942 in the Aga Khan Palace, Poona. It was during this incarceration that the former one day read out "Mazda At Moi Vahishta" from the Parsi Scriptures, and thus that too was included in the prayers at the Ashram.

Not to be left out, the Sikhs tried their best to have some Shabad from Guru Granth Sahib included in Gandhiji's prayers. A good many letters were received by him on this subject and in his last days some elderly Sikh used to visit him and read some Shabad from Granth Sahib. He several times tried hard to have those Shabads included, but Bapuji could not make his choice, and before the final selection was made, was so tragically and mercilessly assassinated.

The daily routine commenced after prayers were over. Morning breakfast was between 6 and 7 a.m., lunch at 11 a.m. and the last meal at 5 p.m. Evening prayers were held at 7, and at 9 o'clock all retired to bed.

Cleaning the Ashram, washing clothes, cooking food, cleansing utensils, chopping vegetables—all this had to be done by the Ashramites themselves, since servants were not employed, as I have previously mentioned. Spinning was incumbent on every one. A roll-call was taken after the prayers and the day's spinning by each person was entered in a register. If anybody had not spun, an explanation was demanded from him. Experiments in spinning were made on different types of Charkhas and spindles. How to increase the speed, how to produce yarn of higher counts, which should be even and of standard

strength, and how to avoid breakage — these were some of the lessons learnt in spinning. In addition, ginning, carding, sliver-making etc. were also taught. Experiments in carding were made on different sorts of carding bows. Weaving, carpentry, smithy, shoe-making — all these handicrafts were taught.

Only leather from cattle which had died from natural causes, was used as it conformed to the principle of non-violence or Ahimsa. The Ashram had its own dairy and a farm. Experiments in food, vegetable and fruit-growing were undertaken. Here, monkeys were a regular menace to the crops grown with so much patience. There was a large experimental workshop, a school for children, and adequate arrangements for the education of women. Bapuji himself conducted the women's classes. To teach music a competent Pandit was engaged. He sang Bhajans in his sweet and melodious voice to the accompaniment of his Tambura during prayers. This musician compiled a book of songs and prayers for the Ashramites.

To manage Ashram affairs a small managing committee was constituted who framed rules and regulations. Every inmate, including women, had the right to vote. Whenever any change was to be made in the rules and regulations, it was done only after ascertaining the views of the Ashramites.

There was a common kitchen, but those families who wished had separate ones. Bapuji also had his own. He always assisted Ba in her household activities; he would chop vegetables, sometimes help her in cooking, but he always felt that there should not be any difference in food between the single Ashramites and the family groups. So one day he decided that there should be only one common mess in the Ashram with one kind of food for all. In the beginning, there was strong opposition to this idea, especially from women who were fond of spices, and the many varieties of food which they cooked for their family members. But finally everybody had to give way to Bapuji, and one common kitchen was established.

Each Ashramite washed his own clothes. In connection with this the question arose as to how much soap per head should be consumed ? The feminine members naturally more fond of cleanliness demanded a liberal quantity of soap, while the masculine element was in favour of reducing it. This gave room for agitation. The question next was whether clothes should be washed with soap daily or once or twice a week. The adamant females again stood out for daily washing with soap. Their demand was conceded in the end.

The food served at the Ashram was very simple. Boiled vegetables without spices and grease, or raw vegetables according to choice, Chapati or bread prepared in the Ashram itself, rice, Dal, milk, butter-milk, oil or ghee, Gur, and fruit only for those really requiring it. This was the daily fare. Usually, all the required vegetables were produced in the Ashram garden. Lunch time was 11 o'clock sharp. Fifteen minutes before the meal all work was suspended at the ringing of a bell, and everybody got ready to go to the dining hall. Those who had not taken their baths in the morning would now bathe. Then each person would go in with his utensils and take his seat. Punctually at 11 a.m. meals were served. Late comers had to wait for the second sitting. As soon as food was served a bell was struck and everybody sat in silence. Then all chanted :

ॐ सहनाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

(" In the name of God, May He protect us, may He support us : May we go forward together, true comrades : May our search after truth find its fruit : May we never hold in our hearts ill-will the one for the other : In the name of God, Peace.)

and after saying " Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti ", the meal began. Rules were so strictly observed that even when perchance the Mahatma himself was late, he waited outside like all the rest. Thus, no exceptions were made.

Bapuji used to sit in the centre with children and women on one side and men on the other. Sick people were put on special diet prescribed by Gandhiji. Bapuji being a very slow eater was able to keep his eye on everybody.

At this time, experiments in diet were very much in vogue. Practically every other person had taken one sort of vow or the other. One would not take any kind of milk ; a second would take only cow's milk ; a third would take nothing but boiled vegetables, while a fourth only raw vegetables. Then again someone would take only Roti and milk while still another would live on just fruit and milk. All these numerous experiments were made under the direct supervision of Gandhiji. He himself was foremost in trying them out. As a matter of fact, his whole life was one long experiment ! Once, when I visited the Ashram, I found that most of the Ashramites were on a raw food experiment. Raw wheat was soaked in water at night and taken in the morning after it had sprouted. Likewise, raw vegetables, raw milk, raw groundnuts, raw fruits were taken in the same way. Side by side with this experiment, Nature-cure experiments were also undertaken. Those who came into contact with Bapuji invariably suffered from physical or mental ailments. As a result some called Gandhiji's comrades "Shiva's Baratis" or museum exhibits ! In fact, all sorts of people had gathered around him forming a real human laboratory. There were three meals a day. Breakfast, which consisted of porridge and milk, or some fruit and milk. The evening meal was almost the same as that of the morning, with only this difference in that generally Khichadi was served as it saved time.

Bapuji usually went for a walk after the evening meal. He supported himself on either side by placing his hands on the shoulders of two girls who were called his "walking sticks". There was keen competition among the younger inmates as to who were to be in the coveted position of his walking sticks. After his stroll, he joined in the prayers which were held in the open Maidan facing the Sabarmati river. Sometimes he delivered post-prayer speeches for a few minutes, or he would answer questions put forward

by the Ashramites, or he would read passages from Tulsidas' Ramayana which he liked most of all.

There was a branch of the Sabarmati Ashram in Wardha where Shri Vinoba Bhave and some other workers lived. Bapuji visited it once a year. The same rules and regulations were observed there as in the parent Ashram. Now it has been converted into a girls' school.

He lived at the Sabarmati Ashram upto 11th March, 1930. On the 12th of March he started on his historical Dandi March. He took a vow not to return to the Ashram until he achieved Independence and liberated his country from British domination. Although he achieved his goal in the long run, yet, alas, he was unable to return to his beloved Ashram in his lifetime, which was later converted into a refuge for Harijans (or "Untouchables").

Upon his release from jail in 1933, Bapuji lived in the Wardha Ashram, and from there he later shifted to Maganwadi, which was the name given to Jamnalal Bajaj's Garden House. It was named after Maganlal Gandhi, the Mahatma's nephew, who died in 1929. This garden was dedicated to his memory and a Village Industries Museum was established there in his name. Maganlal Gandhi was an old and much-loved colleague of Bapu's and was considered by him to be his right-hand man. After a few years had passed Gandhiji left Maganwadi also and moved to a place called Segaon, now known as Sevagram. This small village is about five miles from Wardha.

In the beginning, he shifted to his new quarters, without taking anybody with him, not even Ba or Mahadevbhai. On arrival there he took shelter under a Pipal tree. Mahadevbhai went there daily sometimes on foot, and sometimes in a cart, and acquainted Bapuji with the day's news and returned to Maganwadi by nightfall.

Sevagram slowly began to grow. The first to join Gandhiji was Mahadevbhai, then Ba and Pyarelal, and later the rest followed. More houses were built. A small cottage was constructed for Bapuji, and another for Ba. Next came the turn of Mahadevbhai, and at last a big hall was constructed to accommodate the other Ashramites. A

dairy was then opened, followed by a Basic Education centre; a Khadi Training School was established, and a hospital erected by the Kasturba Trust. The Ashram rapidly developed and expanded until it surpassed even the Sabarmati Ashram, both in size and scope.

I lived with Gandhiji in all these places, and I still have sweet memories of those days. As I have stated above, when I visited the Ashram for the first time, I stayed with Mahadevbhai as Bapu was still weak from his recent fast. A musician used to come to him and play on his Vina. I heard the best music in Bapu's company such as I may never again hear. Though Bapu was not given to singing, he had a musical ear and was well versed in this art. He always insisted on correct singing and sweet voice. But even more important to him than these two requisites were depth of feeling and purity of heart. That is why everybody was not allowed to join in the singing during prayers. Unless one of his companions had previously acquainted himself with a newcomer's talents and had told Bapu as to how he sang, he was not allowed to sing. Professional singers were forbidden to sing during prayers.

The first public function that Gandhiji attended after the breaking of his fast was the Gujarat Vidyapith Convocation on December 5, 1925 to which I accompanied him. This was the first National University which was started in Ahmedabad in the Non-co-operation days. As students were again lured by Government services, their number in the University had considerably diminished. While delivering his Convocation Address Gandhiji said: "These national institutions, in spite of their faults, are to me so many oases in the desert of our hopes and aspirations. From them must rise the nation of the future."

The next day he visited Dholka, a nearby town. It was my first opportunity of travelling with Gandhiji and attending a conference. As he was still very weak, every possible precaution was taken to keep the crowd in perfect order and control. He was placed in a room on the first floor of the house. I was entrusted with the task of serving

his meals which consisted of fruit and goat's milk. I carried a dripping glass of milk and just placed it on his desk without first wiping the bottom of the glass. The result was that when Bapu lifted the glass from the desk, he found the desk top spotted with drops of milk and the varnish stained and spoiled. He did not tolerate such clumsiness. He gave me a piece of his mind, and immediately taught me a lesson in the science of cleanliness.

In the evening a public meeting was held. As his voice was very feeble, Gandhiji's message was read out to the audience which ran as follows :

"I am thankful that in spite of my inability, God has enabled me to keep my promise to pay you a visit. I hear that there are many Talukdars here. I hope that they will cultivate and maintain cordial relations with their tenants. I am told that there is no Hindu-Muslim tension here. Let the relations be more friendly than they are. How can I convince you that spinning and exclusive use of Khaddar is the swiftest way to Swaraj? A yard of Khaddar used by you means four or five annas in the pockets of your poor countrymen. I wish I could also carry home to you my conviction that to regard any human being as "untouchable" is to insult oneself and one's religion. It is the evil passions in us that are untouchable and let us be rid of them. Purify yourselves and spin half an hour daily as sacrifice; if you think spinning need not add to your income, spin in the name of God, and spin for the poor of your land." (*Young India*, 17-12-'25, p. 439)

The next occasion upon which I visited the Ashram, I stayed with Bapuji in his cottage "Hridaya Kunj", or, the "Garden of the Heart". Ba had a separate kitchen those days. After morning prayers, Bapuji joined in chopping up the vegetables. I too took part in this activity. Talks on various topics followed. In those days, I was both dejected and physically unfit. I underwent various Nature-cure treatments and diet experiments under Gandhiji's guidance. Whenever a Nature-cure expert

visited him and I happened to be with him, he never forgot to consult him on my behalf. Unfortunately, I kept falling ill, which made him uneasy and he sent me home. Mahatmaji was very thoughtful ; he took great care of my health, in spite of the many pressing matters on his mind. Once, I got fever in the Ashram. My mother receiving news of my illness came to see me. She was very orthodox of the "touch me not" type. Bapu asked her whether she would partake of the Ashram food and she declined much to our amusement. He just could not persuade her to take meals there, despite all his charm.

About this time, the son of a Talukdar from the United Provinces was staying in the Ashram. He had itch all over his body, and Bapu undertook to treat him. He told the young man not to smoke. I was asked to look after him. Gandhiji's wide interest covered all members of the Ashram, and somehow he managed to get a report on everybody's activities. I was ignorant about Bapu having prohibited the young man from smoking. Bapu enquired about his progress. I told him all that I knew, and in passing, casually mentioned that he smoked cigarettes. That evening Bapu visited him and asked him whether he still smoked. He categorically denied the fact. Mahatmaji kept quiet at the time but he sent for me later the same night and said that he was shocked to hear the boy utter a lie. As he abhorred falsehood, those who lied to him lost his favour. He asked me to see the young man in the morning and explain things clearly to him.

Bapu did not sleep well that night as he was filled with anguish. The boy saw Bapu early next morning and confessed his wrongdoing and asked for forgiveness. Only then did Bapu regain his composure.

Whenever I asked him to give me his autograph, or to write something for me, he invariably put down, "whatever may happen don't give up truth", or, "follow complete truth and non-violence to the best of your capacity." Presenting a copy of his *Autobiography* to me he wrote, "One who wants to be a devotee of truth and

non-violence, should learn the lesson of fearlessness and determination."

Likewise, speaking on the shortcomings of a fellow companion, he once said: "Today one of my dear companions is guilty of a great lapse in moral conduct. We should understand that well, and should ever remain cautious. We should think before we act. Everyone suffers from limitations and failings of one kind or another. Faults surround us on all sides. Who knows when temptation will beset us? One may be of strong Satvik Vritti character and may have made great efforts to wipe out his sins, accumulated in his countless previous lives, but the unseen evil power is such that all these good efforts may be undone in a moment. It is just possible that a man whom we held in high esteem till yesterday, and about whom there was no breath of scandal or sin may fall from grace today. We must always bear in mind that we are imperfect beings, and we should therefore always remain cautious. Who knows when and what wrongs we may commit? A sin does not necessarily mean that it will have to take an outward and physical form which people can see. Even when we think an evil thought, or look upon an ugly sight, a sin has already been committed. Hence, who can dare to say that he has never committed a sin in thought, word, or deed? Who knows how many such secret sins he has committed in his thoughts from morning to evening? But one who is aware of his weaknesses, and by whom sins are unwittingly committed will weep before his God, will call Him and pray to give him Atmashakti. If his heart is pure, without any deceit and pride, God is sure to respond to his call and protect him, because He knows the hearts of everyone. Nobody can deceive Him. Has He not proclaimed in the Gita that, 'Even a sinner, however great, if he turns to Me with undivided devotion, must indeed be counted a saint.' Wrongs committed in ignorance shall undoubtedly be forgiven but if one falls knowingly, who can save him? Such a one cannot be forgiven. Sin may be committed by high or low but punishment shall be the same for both. Will a thief who has

stolen one rupee escape punishment, while another, who has looted a treasure, be punished severely? God's ways are different.

"Hate not the sinner. If anyone does, he shall be blessed. But what will be our fate? Whom are we to hate? Are we ourselves free from sins? Seeing a normally good man committing a sin, we should consider that if such a man could commit a sin where would people like us be? And realizing this, we should always be cautious. If anybody claims to be a Vairagi, I would bid him goodbye from a distance, for does the sun ever make an announcement that it is giving out heat? No. We just feel the radiation of heat. In the same way, the real Vairagi is one who has given up Raga and Dvesha — likes and dislikes, and is akin to God. We are tested at every step, and at every step there is danger of a fall.

"Those who have joined me in the Satyagraha Ashram must realize their responsibilities. To live here means taking a vow to follow the truth, and to purify our hearts. He who considers it impossible to follow this path should feel free to leave the Ashram, but he should not stay on poluting the atmosphere with pretentiousness. The struggle for freedom can only be fought by relying on the soul-force of the Ashramites. So far we have failed because our ideals have not been followed. Knowing all these things, I do not run away from difficulties but face them because my life is one long struggle in the search for truth and goodness through non-violence. Living in such an atmosphere, I strive to conserve peace of mind, though at times this is extremely difficult."

Speaking on finding fault with others, Bapuji once said, "Picking holes in others is a very bad habit, especially common amongst women, but found in men as well. People carry tales everywhere of others' little faults without first ascertaining the truth about them. They rejoice in finding fault in others' weaknesses and they raptly listen to tale-carrying and gossip. But if one were to look into oneself, one would also find oneself full of limitations. Nobody in this world is perfect. Hearing of others' faults,

if we would but put ourselves in their place, we would not find ourselves free of them. In fact we should take a lesson from the failings of others and try constantly to overcome them. Christ has said that it is easier to see a mote in another's eye than a beam in one's own. That is, it is easy to find faults in others. But can anybody in this world dare to say that he has never been a prey to evil? If you could find such a perfect being, whether he be a man or a woman, old or young, he is worthy of adoration. He, who is in constant search of Truth, is conscious of his own faults every moment of the day, and has no time to find fault with others, as he has to give an account of every minute of his life. Truth is God, Truth is Soul (Atma) and it is our highest ideal. If we are in constant search of that Truth we shall be blessed by It."

One morning Prabhudas Gandhi and I went to see Bapuji to get his advice on certain matters. Explaining the duties of a friend Bapuji said, "See this lighted candle. It is my friend because it gives me light. But if a snake were to crawl in at this moment, this candle would perhaps become a foe because I am so surrounded by the candle light and the table on which it is placed that it would be difficult to move out easily. Take friendship in the same light. As long as it helps you, it is a friendly spirit but when it turns against you it takes the form of enmity, and is an unfriendly spirit."

Bapuji considered Life and Death in the same terms. Smallpox once took an epidemic form in the Ashram. Pandit Khare's child died of it the day a marriage ceremony was to be celebrated. Bapu first took the dead child to the cremation ground, and then returned to join in the wedding ceremony, thus showing that he took these two in his stride, and in a matter-of-fact manner.

Gandhiji made revolutionary changes in the marriage code. The whole ceremony was over within half an hour, and hardly five rupees were spent. The bride and the groom received Gandhiji's blessings and immediately began planning a happy and useful life. In his last days, he

practically insisted that one party be Harijan, or he would not give his blessings. The beloved autocrat!

At that time at the Ashram the entire Bhagavadgita was recited. It took fourteen days, beginning on a Friday. Later on, it was completed in seven days. Why he fixed on Friday of all days to begin the Gita, I never did find out unless it was that Friday was observed as a holiday in the Ashram. Was this so because it was a sacred day for the Muslims, or was it because Christ was crucified on that day? Or, perhaps he had a feeling that he would depart from this world on a Friday, thus making it a day of great importance to his countrymen. The choice of a Friday gives rise to many interesting speculations.

He was very particular about the correct pronunciation of the words of the Gita.

Once, when he was away at Almora on a Khadi tour the fourth chapter had to be recited in the morning prayers. Perchance, nobody was present there that day except myself who knew the prayer. I had to lead and recite the whole chapter. In my egoism, I was confident that I could recite the chapter correctly. But just as I began to recite the 42 Shlokas which constitute that chapter, I became conscious of my faulty pronunciation and was overcome with shame. To correct it, I had to relearn the entire Gita afresh; even at that I never came up to Bapu's standards. Bapu's impression was that the Sanskrit pronunciation of North Indian Pandits was invariably faulty, and consequently I suffered as I come from that part of the country.

Addressing the Ashramites on one occasion he said, "You should not be a burden if you go anywhere. Ashramites should live like flowers which are never a burden to anybody but leave their sweet fragrance behind. By this I mean that an Ashramavasi should not only do his own work, but should also assist others, thus leaving nothing but good impressions behind him."

But how can one adjust oneself to keeping one's vows intact, while being a guest of others? Gandhiji one day said in this connection: "Wherever you go for your meals

you need not give up your vows, but be considerate of the convenience of your friends. Eat what you get there in conformity with your vows. At least you should be able to get rice and bread everywhere. This much is sufficient for you. You take it with salt and be grateful to your friend."

One of the rules observed in the Wardha Ashram was that he who ate there should either have to grind or clean the cereals. Bapuji himself used to grind after morning prayers, and clean the cereals after breakfast. I joined him in this task, and was sometimes his partner in grinding as well.

Every Ashramite kept a diary, as it was compulsory. I began keeping mine from 1929, and Bapuji examined it every now and then. I wrote only on one side of the paper ; so he wrote a note saying, "Ought to write on both sides, as otherwise half the paper is wasted."

In 1932, when he was in the Yeravda prison, I wrote a letter telling him what people thought about the inmates of the Ashram. From jail, on September 11, 1932, he replied as follows :

"It is true that the Ashramites are not what they ought to be. They have many faults. And for this reason, people are perfectly justified in criticizing them and speaking ill of them. The Ashramites should patiently bear this in mind, though this is not enough. They should take a lesson from it. I am not surprised that you too have had the same experience. But, in spite of all this, I believe that the result is not bad. The fact is that there was a great deal to do which could not be done, and no more could be done under the circumstances. The question is : Who can be called an Ashramite ? If you have not already discussed this matter with Narayandas, have a heart-to-heart talk with him now. I do not expect to get a man of greater conviction, discrimination and intelligence than he. I consider that it is by God's grace that I have got him as a colleague. It is true that the Ashramites are not without diseases. But it is enough that they do not fall ill after

joining the Ashram, though they do come there with diseases. The fact is that they try to achieve completeness from incompleteness. It is ordained by God that man should die performing his duty. The results are predestined by Him. Therefore, if it is found that there is no lack of endeavour, I shall be satisfied. I shall even admit that there is scope for improvement in further endeavour on the part of the Ashramites."

Explaining as to who is a true Ashramite, Bapuji wrote, in his letter dated September 12, 1935, to me:

"Only he can be called an Ashramite who has no monetary or other earthly connection with his parents or relatives, and who has no other needs save those of food and clothing, and who always adheres to the observance of non-violence and the other ten vows. Therefore, he who saves even a little money cannot be considered an Ashramite. Taking this point of view, nobody should be paid more than Rs 10/- a month, and if he saves something from this amount, after meeting his bare necessities, it should be returned to the Ashram exchequer. If there are some, whose services we need, and, who are true servants, but who owing to circumstances, cannot serve on less, we can engage them by paying more. Our budget should not exceed our capital. You can read out this to all those who are working with you, and thereby be relieved of your burden and responsibility."

## IV

## FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

Remaining for most of the time at the Sabarmati Ashram, Gandhiji kept himself aloof from all political activities for one full year, and devoted the whole of 1926 to constructive work. This was noted in the Congress Session at Kanpur. He left for Wardha in the middle of December, where he stayed for sometime. Later on, he left for Gauhati to attend the Congress Session, and broke his one year old political silence on December 20 when he addressed a public meeting. After the conclusion of the session Gandhiji undertook an extensive propaganda tour of the country for increasing the spinning, weaving and sale of Khadi which he wished to popularize. In March, 1927, he attended the Silver Jubilee celebration at Gurukul Kangdi where I joined him. Addressing the audience he referred to the late Swami Shraddhanandji, who was assassinated in Delhi on December 24 by a Muslim fanatic, and said, " The Gurukula was Swamiji's best effort and though he is not physically with us, yet he lives amongst us in his Gurukula. It was his most original contribution to education, for at a time when many were taken up by a Western type of education and foreign training he insisted that we should think, act, and educate ourselves in the Vedic way." (*Young India*, 31-3-'27, p. 106)

Upon his return, Gandhiji was to break journey first at Delhi for a few hours and then take the next train to Sabarmati. I suggested that I would precede him to Delhi by another route and arrange for his stay at my place provided he approved of the plan. He gave his consent, and I reached Delhi, via Muradabad, a few hours before his arrival. After making the necessary arrangements, I reached the Railway Junction to receive him. Having no car in those days I wanted to take him by Tonga, but he preferred walking on foot from the station to my house. He passed through the Queen's Gardens which are just in front of the station on the way to my house. On reaching the other side

of the Gardens near the Clock Tower, the gates were closed, and he therefore decided to scale the wall of the Gardens, which he did ! After resting for some time, he had visitors. Among them was Shri Vithalbhai Patel who came to see him and was closeted with him for a considerable time. After his callers had departed, Gandhiji left for Sabarmati.

Bapuji had such a strenuous time during his four months' tour that he suffered a complete nervous breakdown at Poona in April. His blood pressure went up, and he was advised to take complete rest for three months. He spent this period at the Nandi Hills in Mysore State and stayed there as the Maharaja's guest. After recouping his health he again commenced touring from the second week of July. In October, while he was still at Mangalore, Lord Irwin invited him to Delhi on November 5 for an important talk, and Gandhiji had to cancel the rest of his tour programme. Lord Irwin then placed in his hands the Secretary of State's announcement regarding the Simon Commission which was so disappointing that Gandhiji felt that "a one anna envelope containing the news would have sufficed instead of sending for me from a distance of a thousand miles." On this occasion Gandhiji stayed with Dr. Ansari at Daryaganj. People urged him to stay in Delhi for a few more days and address a public meeting. But he was so sore at heart due to communal riots in various parts of the country during the last few months, that he declined to stay a minute longer than was absolutely necessary. "I cannot bear being in this city, for I suffer deep pangs of humiliation", he said. "In the ordinary course of events I should not have come here."

Gandhiji, however, did participate in two functions during his short stay in the city : To receive suggestions and advice from Gandhiji the members of the newly-formed Charkha Sangh met at Dr. Ansari's place on the evening of November 1. The other function was a visit to the Jamia Millia Islamia. Gandhiji, while addressing the students, said, "You will keep your precincts sacred and free from the poison of communal strife and communal hatred."

From Delhi Bapuji proceeded to Ceylon and collected funds for his Khadi work prior to returning to Sabarmati.

Dr. Ansari presided at the Annual Session of the Congress which met at Madras that year and it was resolved that the Simon Commission be ignored in every possible way.

Agitation for the boycott of the Commission was carried on in the beginning of 1928 throughout the country. Delhi was the first place visited by the Commission. I remember how hard we worked throughout the whole night previous to the Commission's arrival, and decorated the walls of the present Parliament House with the slogan "Go Back Simon", and fastened a black flag on the Gate of India despite the fact that it was guarded, day and night, by the police. The Government had to employ a contingent of labourers to clean the walls; the job was done only with great difficulty, and after it had served its purpose. The boycott, I am glad to state, was a complete success.

Several meetings of the All-Parties Conference were held in Delhi in February, March and May of 1928, the aim being to consider the political situation in the country. These meetings were attended by Gandhiji, who stayed with Lakshmi Narain Gadodia at his residence in Kucha Natwan during these visits to the Capital. A Committee, with Pandit Motilal Nehru as President was appointed to draft a Constitution for India.

In the last week of August, 1928, Gandhiji attended the All-Parties Conference at Lucknow, which was called to consider the Nehru Report. I joined him there. The report was welcomed by all communities who participated in the Conference, as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems. Later on, the Muslim section backed out, and in the end the report lapsed in 1929 after the Lahore Congress met.

For several years now, it was Gandhiji's custom to spend a few weeks each year at his Wardha Ashram. As usual, he started, in December, from the Sabarmati

Ashram to spend a fortnight there, and I accompanied him, as was my frequent custom. I made the acquaintance of Shri Vinoba Bhave, who was known as the Saint of Wardha, and he very kindly undertook to teach me the recitation of the Bhagavadgita. In keeping with the Ashram rules, Gandhiji cleaned the cereals and ground the flour early in the morning. From Wardha, he proceeded to Calcutta to attend the Congress Session there, and I left for Delhi accompanied by his second son, Manilal Gandhi.

In February, 1929, while he was touring Sindh, Gandhiji was asked by the Congress President to attend the Working Committee meeting, to be held in Delhi in the third week, in order to explain his scheme of boycott of foreign cloth before it was finally adopted by the Congress. On this occasion Gandhiji stayed with Shri Vithalbhai Patel, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, at 20, Akbar Road, New Delhi. Shri Patel invited Lord Irwin, who was supposedly very friendly with him, to tea at his residence, and thus gave an opportunity to Lord Irwin to talk to Gandhiji. Great expectations were aroused by this unexpected meeting, but nothing came out of it!

In the beginning of March, Gandhiji proceeded to Burma on his Khadi tour. On his way he was to pass through Delhi. I telegraphed to him to have a bath at Harijan Nivas during his brief stay there. In response to my suggestion he got down at New Delhi Railway station, drove to the Harijan colony with me, had a bath, and a cold drink, and chatted with the children for a few minutes before rejoining his party at the main Delhi station.

He halted at Calcutta for a day, and addressed a public meeting in Shraddhanand Park on March 4, where he made a bonfire of foreign clothes. He was arrested for defying the Police Commissioner's orders, and stood his trial on March 26 when he returned from Burma. He was fined rupee one as a token fine.

His Khadi tour was still on and he visited Almora district in the second week of June, 1929. Devadas

Gandhi and I had already reached Almora. We joined him at Nainital and after visiting Bhawali, reached Almora on the 18th. A very sad accident occurred on that day. While Gandhiji was returning to his host's house, after addressing a public meeting, a villager who came rushing from the crowd to have Gandhiji's Darshan, fell down, and the car ran over him. He was seriously hurt, and succumbed to his injuries after two days. This was the only accident which occurred during Gandhiji's long tour extending over several months. It profoundly shocked him and made him very sad.

This was my first experience of accompanying Gandhiji on a long tour. I was entrusted with the task of keeping accounts of the daily collections made at the public meetings. Gandhiji used to auction all the articles so received, and many things — even the most ordinary articles — fetched fancy prices because he was the auctioneer. This practice he continued all his life, thus collecting thousands of rupees for his various constructive activities.

From Almora, Gandhiji proceeded to Kauśani, which was considered one of the fairest of beauty spots, not only in the Himalayas but, as the late Lord Curzon is reported to have once observed, in the world. He put up at a Dak Bungalow, and he spent his ten days there in peace and seclusion. He used to sit in a closed verandah admiring the beauty of the silvery peaks covered with snow. These white peaks would slowly turn golden at dawn or dusk. Here it was that Gandhiji wrote the introduction to his book *Anasakti Yoga* — a translation of the Gita into Gujarati.

While at Kausani, Gandhiji visited Bageshware, which was 22 miles away, and situated on the banks of the Sarayu. As the road was mountainous he was carried in a Dandi which proved to be very trying for him. So upon his return journey, we tried to make him more comfortable by changing hands with the coolies who were carrying his Dandi, hoping that we would jolt him less. This was the only time I carried Bapuji on my shoulders.

Gandhiji was to proceed to Delhi in the first week of July to attend the Working Committee meeting on the 5th. Ba suggested that they should stay at my house. To this, Bapu at once said, " Brij Krishna has no house of his own. He is living with his brothers. When he keeps his own house, we shall surely stay with him." He looked at me, and I meekly nodded my head in assent. Thus he gave up staying with me, and I did not insist on his staying with me again.

From Kausani, Gandhiji next went to Ramnagar, and then on to Kashipur, and finally to Delhi on the 4th evening, reaching there on the 5th of July. This time, he stayed with Seth Lakshmi Narain Gadodia, leaving for Sabarmati the same night, after attending the Congress Working Committee meeting.

In November, 1929 Gandhiji once again visited Delhi when he was touring the U. P. doing further propaganda for Khadi. I joined him at Meerut where he interviewed the Communist prisoners who were on trial, and chatted with them for one and a half hours. He then visited the Gandhi Ashram. From Meerut he proceeded to Hapur and stayed with Chaudhari Raghubir Narain Singh at Asaura village, from where he went to Delhi. He again stayed with Seth Gadodia this time for two days.

The Mahatma had a heavy programme while in Delhi, which began with a visit to the Jamia where he addressed the students and received a purse of Rs 500/-. From there, he motored to Gurukul Indraprastha, about 14 miles from Delhi, where he addressed the students and received another purse of Rs 855/-. In the afternoon, the Delhi Municipal Committee presented him with an address. He auctioned the Municipal address casket which fetched Rs 800/- and the garlands fetched Rs 91/-. He next spoke at a students' meeting at the Hindu College, and at the public meeting which followed it he received a purse of Rs 5,753/-. Bapu also addressed a ladies' meeting, and a Mazdoor meeting, besides attending the Working Committee meeting which was called by Motilal Nehru to

consider Lord Irwin's announcement made on the 31st October. He collected Rs 11,154/- in all from Delhi for his Khadi purse.

Gandhiji was once again called to Delhi to meet the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, on December 23, along with Pandits Motilal Nehru and Malaviya, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr M. A. Jinnah, and others, to have a talk with him in connection with the forthcoming Round Table Conference. He stayed at 1, Aurangzeb Road on this occasion.

The Mahatma wanted an assurance that the Round Table Conference would proceed on the basis of full Dominion Status. The Viceroy's answer was that the Government view was explained in their communique, and he could make no further promise. Thus, the talks resulted in a complete failure, and this was the precursor of the grim struggle which was to take place in the near future.

From Delhi he left, accompanied by me, for Lahore in order to attend the Congress Session, of which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the President-elect. We were all accommodated in tents, and found it extremely trying as it was terribly cold that particular year. It was a never-to-be-forgotten sight to see Pandit Motilal Nehru showering silver coins upon his son Jawaharlal from the roof of a house, as the latter rode on a horse in a procession through Anarkali Bazar. The worthy father handed over the Congress reins to his worthy son, under whose Presidentship a resolution for the attainment of Complete Independence was adopted on the midnight of December 31, after which Panditji unfurled the tricolour flag on the banks of the river Ravi and announced the achievement of Complete Independence as India's goal. With this aim ahead of them, India's teeming millions once again began to look to Gandhiji for guidance.

The Mahatma returned to his Ashram from the Lahore Session in the beginning of 1930. On his way back, he halted at Ramapura village, near Delhi, for a day. It was at this village that Seth Gadodia had his dairy.

The 26th of January, 1930 was observed as Independence Day throughout the country. The problem then

facing the country was: What form should the Satyagraha Movement take to demonstrate Mass Civil Disobedience as a means of attaining Purna Swaraj? The Working Committee met at Sabarmati on February 14-16 to decide what should be done. It was resolved to begin with the breaking of the Salt Laws, as advised by Gandhiji.

I was at Wardha in those days doing Khadi work, but I was suffering from low temperature. Bapuji sent for me, and packed me off to Vijapur — at a distance of about 40 miles — for a change. This is why I was unable to join his Dandi March. My mother, who was very fond of me feared that I might be arrested. So she came down to Vijapur together with my elder brother, in order to dissuade me from joining the movement, and to get me to return home. But I was adamant. Ultimately the matter was taken to Bapuji who pleaded with my mother and brother to let me remain and take my chance with the rest. We arrived at the decision that I should not court imprisonment myself, but that if the police arrested me, I should not try to avoid it. Mother was then persuaded, with much difficulty, to return home. Bapuji wrote to me a letter dated 8-3-'30 (4 a.m.) giving details of his talks with my family members, and asked me to return to Vijapur and to see him for a minute before leaving.

At last came the 12th March — the historic day — when Bapuji and 79 other inmates of the Ashram set out to Dandi to break the Salt Law. On that eventful day he declared that he was determined not to return to the Ashram until his mission was fulfilled. "Either, I shall return with what I want, or my body will float in the sea", said he.

While I was at the Vijapur Ashram, I received daily accounts of the preparations which were being made at the Ashram for the March, and I cursed myself for having reported about my ill health to Bapuji, and which now debarred me from joining the party much as I wanted to. As the marching day approached, I could no longer resist the temptation to join the group, even though it meant contravening Gandhiji's orders, and in my great

enthusiasm I promptly left for Aslali, Gandhiji's first halt, and reached there in time to see him. The party had already arrived. Bapuji was very busy ; though he had seen me, he did not speak to me but remained silent. This gave me courage and I also went to the next halt, albeit foolishly, for I should have known better and taken the Mahatma's silence as a sign of displeasure ! This time, however, he sent for me, and scolded me in a manner such as I shall never forget ! I returned to Vijapur immediatey, feeling rather like a naughty child who had been punished. Upon my arrival there, I received a very affectionate letter from him in which he wrote :

" I was pained to have to use harsh words to you, but they were unavoidable, as I wished to remove your faint-heartedness. Unless you are determined and set in your purpose, your energies cannot be fully utilized. Tenderness of heart is essential, but for true tenderness determination is even more essential. Thereby are family ties purified, and delusion overcome. You must also give up your desire to meet me unless seeing me is for an essential purpose. Whatever I could give you in the way of moral strength and encouragement I have already given. A time will come when you too will have to go to jail like so many of us, but for the present your work is your jail. Therefore, don't leave Vijapur unless it is on important business. Improve your health, and from where you are give us whatever help you can.

15-3-'30 Bapu's Blessings "

Gandhiji reached Dandi on the 5th, and broke the Salt Law on the morning of April 6. A wave of enthusiasm spread all over the country. Women, who had never before come out of their seclusion, were foremost in this movement in which arrests were indiscriminately made. As I was under orders not to leave the Ashram, I could only read the newspaper accounts and with suppressed feelings. At last another affectionate letter dated the 11th April came from Bapuji to cheer me up, in which he wrote as follows :

"If you have no work in Vijapur, come here. The climate is very bracing. The house faces the sea, and cool breeze blows day and night. Dandi is only ten miles from the Navsari station. Even if I am arrested, and the camp dismantled you can stay here."

I was overjoyed to receive this letter. Krishnadas Gandhi and I immediately left for Dandi by the very first available train and reached there the next morning. Bapu was busily engaged in his work, but that evening he took us for a walk on the seashore, and asked me which work I would prefer? Would I join in the struggle for India's Independence, or, would I take to Khadi work? I preferred to join the movement, while Krishnadas joined the group of Khadi workers. Taking leave of Bapu with his blessings I took some salt from the sea, and started for Delhi the next day.

As soon as I reached there I reported myself to the Congress authorities, but found that I had a few hurdles to overcome at home. I belonged to an old, conservative, and rich family in Delhi, and we had our own family traditions and orthodox ways. I had never before this taken any active part in politics. Though my association with Gandhiji was by now six years' old, yet my political activities went no further than enlisting myself as a primary four anna member of the Congress and doing some constructive work, which consisted mainly of propagation of Khadi. I had started a Khadi centre, and had attended many Congress Sessions, but only in the capacity of a mere visitor. Once, at the Gaya Congress, I attended as a delegate. I had always been averse to joining any elective body, since party-politics had never interested me. There was no risk in the type of work I had been doing so far, but now it was a question of coming directly into conflict with the Government, and who could predict what the outcome and the end of it all would be? My father had died during my childhood, but fortunately for me my mother, for whom I had the greatest affection, was still alive. It was she who was against my going to jail. My eldest brother, who had brought me up and was the head of the family,

was of a somewhat conservative type. However, I had a great regard for him too. To join the movement was to go against all the family traditions and to court the displeasure of my elders, but the one redeeming feature (though, of course, sad in its way) was that my wife had died, thus making me a free man, able to do as I chose. I had strongly opposed their idea of my remarriage. For this I had to undergo a 72 hours' fast as penance. Since then everybody in the house was a little afraid of me and so nobody openly opposed me in my activities. Finally, I did join the movement.

A regular Satyagraha camp was organized by the Daryaganj Congress where volunteers were trained. Other camps were organized in the nearby villages. The Delhi movement was in full swing. Most of the prominent workers were arrested for breach of the Salt Laws, and Mr Abdulla Churiwala acted as Dictator. Foreign cloth shops and liquor shops were picketed. Women took a prominent part in the movement and this brought the purda ladies out of their seclusion. Bahen Satyavati, a grand-daughter of Swami Shraddhanand was the most popular amongst the ladies, and she wielded great influence on the masses. Though she was a newcomer to the political field, her zeal for work and her powers of oratory bewitched the masses who, in consequence, responded to her appeal. People were most enthusiastic, and the movement had the general support of the public. Articles and money were lavishly contributed to the Congress.

Defining Civil Disobedience Bapuji once said: "One who observes all laws willingly, alone has the right to break any law which he considers to be harmful. This should be done in a humble spirit. Hence, even in opposition he shall have to be non-violent in word, thought and deed. Though oppressed, or greatly insulted, he should never get angry but should suffer patiently. Prahlad can be cited as an example. He obeyed his father explicitly in all matters, but when he was asked not to utter God's name, he most humbly refused to obey him. 'How can I desist,

he would say, from taking the name of one who is Father of us all?' Though he was abused and tortured for his disobedience, he would not submit, and gladly suffered all for the sake of his convictions. This was true Civil Disobedience."

In the beginning of my association with Gandhiji I was entrusted with Khadi work. From time to time I submitted regular reports to him and followed his advice and instructions. In one of his letters from Karadi, dated 23-4-'30, he wrote, "I have your letter, what purpose shall I serve by asking you to come here? I know the current situation in Delhi, and I feel that you should stay there and do what you can. If it is possible to start Khadi manufacture in Delhi, or its surroundings, do so. Make bamboo Taklis and teach the same to others. Also collect yarn. Meet Nair and do whatever is possible. I don't see any harm in making the Ashram a permanent feature of our life, but if people have faith in our good intentions and real desire to help India's cause, then be sure that the Ashram will automatically become an abiding institution. This is our final struggle, and therefore it shall last till Swaraj is achieved. And when Independence is attained, all the Ashrams will automatically become permanent."

Gandhiji was arrested on the 5th May, 1930 at Karadi village and was promptly taken to the Yeravda Jail, where he was made a State prisoner (under Regulation XXV of 1827).

When the news of his arrest reached Delhi, a general *hartal* was declared, and as a mark of protest a large procession was taken out. It was a very hot day. All work was forthwith suspended. Even Tongas and tramcars stopped plying. Lady volunteers went to the Civil Courts and asked the officials there to suspend work. This enraged the authorities, who made a severe lathi charge in which many people were injured. In the city, firing upon mobs killed five and wounded a few hundred. This incident gave great impetus to the movement and the taking out of

processions, and holding mass meetings became daily features of Delhi life.

This went on for over four months before the Congress organization in Delhi was declared unlawful. During the period, I was in charge of the Satyagraha camp. Along with all the other inmates of the camp I was arrested on the 17th of September, and everything belonging to the Ashram was confiscated.

Thus did I experience jail life for the first time. I was put into the Delhi District Jail, for several days as an under-trial prisoner and was then convicted for three months, with a fine of Rs 25/-. From here I was transferred to the special jail in Gujarat (Punjab).

I had been to this jail, as a visitor, only a few weeks back when Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi came to visit her son, Devadas Gandhi, who was a prisoner there. Her journey from Delhi to Gujarat was most eventful! The Punjabi people are very excitable in temperament. Their enthusiasm knew no bounds when they became aware that Gandhiji's wife was on her way to the Punjab. At every station they came to have her Darshan, just as if the Mahatma himself were coming. Ba, being of a gentle and simple nature, was embarrassed by the crowds' enthusiasm. But there was no escape from them. She was taken out in procession in Gujarat. Then she visited Kunja, the home-village of Pyarelalji, to meet the members of his family. Here too she was mobbed. Upon her return, she had to break her journey at Amritsar, where she was taken out in a procession, and had to address a mass meeting. Though all this was much against her own inclination, she had to yield to public pressure.

Here it was that I spent my three months in jail. I cherish the sweet memory of those days. Many of the leaders and prominent workers of three provinces, namely, Delhi, Punjab and the N.W.F.P. were in jail, and hence, I had the good fortune of making their acquaintance. The two important persons whom I liked the most were Shri Pandit Jagat Ram Bharadwaj of the Ghadar Party fame and the Sarhadi Gandhi Badshah Khan.

Pandit J. R. Bharadwaj was a well-known figure in Indian jails, as he had been in and out of them since 1914. At this time, however, he was a "jail-bird" for life, his sentence of death having been commuted. Later, he was deported to those isles of ill-repute — the Andamans. It was a case of immediate liking on both sides, and we met as if we were old friends. I spent most of my time in his company. He was essentially a man of religious leanings, though no less a politician. He was well-versed in the Bhagavadgita, of which he was especially fond. He was held in high esteem by his fellow prisoners as well as by the jail authorities.

Khan Saheb was also of the same calibre ; a person of simple and loving nature withal, a man of high ideals and strong determination. He was a stern, fearless fighter with firm convictions. Though broad-minded, he was anti-British to the very core. He spent most of his time in studying different religions and political systems. In spite of being deeply religious, he was dead against Mullas and old antedated conventions. He tried to bring about a social revolution in his somewhat backward country and preached the doctrine of non-violence to them, which was a new way of life, of which the Frontier people were ignorant. He had not met Bapuji as yet, but still I found him even then enthused with Gandhiji's beliefs and practices.

To make the acquaintance of those two great persons in prison was no little gain, and one from which I considerably benefited during my enforced incarceration. I had the greatest admiration and respect for both of them, and it is my proud privilege that the short acquaintance of a mere three months grew into a close and much-valued intimacy during the years which followed. Badshah Khan stayed with me several times at my home as he disliked staying with important political or social leaders. He kept only one spare set of clothes, and would carry his meagre luggage, which consisted of a small bedding and a few other necessary articles, himself.

He was the tallest man in jail, and this great height of his led to some amusing incidents. For instance :

Whenever any prisoner was released, it was an accepted tradition that all the others would collect at the gate to bid him farewell embracing him. Thus, when Khan Saheb's turn came, it was necessary to place a stool upon which the departing " guest " would stand in order to receive his embrace, and a peel of laughter would ensue at this funny sight.

In the evening, it was the Khan Saheb's custom to take a stroll within the inner circular compound of the jail. Sardar Gyani Kartar Singh, who usually accompanied him was of a very short stature. Khan Saheb was jokingly likened to an engine pulling a small bogie behind him.

When I went to the N. W. F. Province with Bapu in 1938, I was his guest at Uttamzai. Khan Saheb gave us the choicest and most delicious fruit to eat. It was decided that we were to visit Waziristan. I then requested him to show us over a gun factory which was located on our way. He, jokingly told me, in Bapu's hearing, how could a gun factory interest me since I was pledged to non-violence? One day, during the course of our tour, we halted at a way-side place, and I, through curiosity, entered a nearby field. It was then evening. He became anxious for my safety as he knew that tribesmen kidnapped strangers. He sent volunteers to search for me, but as I had not gone very far I was easily found. As Gandhiji and the other members of our party were all vegetarians, he took the greatest care in having our food cooked separately. He himself had given up taking meat. The Khan Saheb was always a most courteous and gracious host, and was ever solicitous of Gandhiji's comfort. When Bapu and he parted at Texila, on the completion of our tour, tears of affection were seen in the eyes of both these great men. I remember that when I stayed with him at Mussorrie in 1946, he taught me how to recite Auzbilla — a verse from the Koran, which is now recited in the Ashram prayers.

While I was in the Gujarat jail I received several letters from Bapu, who was then in the Yeravda Prison. In one of his letters to me from there, he wrote :

Congress Working Committee as guests at the author's house (1931)

" I was expecting your letter. I have been warned not to write to Devadas, Krishnan Nair etc. Give my blessings to all.

" Never give up your peace of mind. Do whatever duty is assigned to you. Keep your body fit, and try to give up worrying about things, as anxiety is bad for one's health.

4-8-'30 Bapu's Blessings "

In another letter dated 12-12-'30, he said, " I have your letter. I have given up eating fresh fruit owing to the sad news from outside. Now Pyarelal is here with me. Eating, drinking and performing sacrifice is considered Karma (action). That which is not worth doing is Vikarma (unworthy action). Akarma (inaction) is negation of Karma. Action performed without attachment is called Akarma. Vikarma cannot be performed without attachment. You can certainly question me regarding these, if there is any doubt in your mind. Go out improved in health. Both of us are keeping well."

I was released from jail in the last week of December. Bapuji was released from Yeravda prison on the 26th January, 1931. He went to Bombay, and from there to Allahabad to see Pandit Motilalji who was dangerously ill in Anand Bhawan. I went there to meet him. While I was returning from Allahabad to Delhi, on February 6, I received the sad news in the train of Pandit Motilalji's death.

Bapuji came to Delhi, on the 17th February from Allahabad, and stayed with Dr. Ansari in Daryaganj. He interviewed the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, the same day. Peace talks were going on between Lord Irwin and the Congress. The Working Committee was called to Delhi, and daily sittings took place. Gandhiji used to see the Viceroy, and then acquaint the Committee members with the results of his talks. Mahadevbhai and I sat in the inner room behind closed doors, and would eavesdrop on the conversation. In those days my elder brother, Shri Shrikrishna, worked in the Associated Press of India. Somebody reported to Jawaharlalji that I was giving all the news to my brother. Mahadevbhai and I were listening to the talks when

Pandit Jawaharlal suddenly entered the room and shouted my name. I was much embarrassed! Bapuji was sitting outside in the verandah where the Committee meeting was being held; so I do not know how he managed to be aware of the whole situation, but no sooner had Panditji shouted my name than Bapu was heard saying, "Jawahar, he is my man" and Panditji quietly went back — much to my relief! You see, till then I was not known to Panditji. In this gentle manner did Bapu save my honour. His affectionate words of that day still ring in my ears. Though now Panditji began to know me better, yet his suspicions were not completely removed. Hence, whenever he came to see Bapu, I left the place.

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed on March 4, and the next day, after getting the Mahatma's permission, I invited all the members of the Working Committee to lunch at my residence in Katra Khushal Rai. Pandit Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr. Ansari, Shri Rajendra Prasad, Shri Rajagopalachari, Shri Jamnalal Bajaj, Shri Prakash, Shri Mahadevbhai, and many others graced the occasion. No detail whatever escaped Bapu's bright, alert eyes. He took full note of the lavish meal served, and asked me why I spent so much money on it and why more simple food was not served instead. I had no reply to give.

The meeting, which was held on the Gandhi Grounds on that day, was the biggest ever in my memory. Bazars were closed, and it seemed as if the whole city had gathered there. Men, women, and children came in their thousands. Gandhiji was the only speaker. He was seated on a huge, raised platform. Loud-speakers were not very powerful in those days. Gandhiji gave Darshan to the surging crowd and tried to silence them in order to speak. But his voice was drowned in the noise of the crowd's cries of Jai's; so the meeting had to be dispersed. This part of the Queen's Garden has been named "Gandhi Ground" since that day. In fifteen days' negotiations, Gandhiji visited the Viceroy's House eight times, and spent about 24 hours in all there. His meals were taken to the Viceregal Lodge several times during these conversations. As Gandhiji could not address

a mass meeting on the 5th, he addressed one on March 7. He left Delhi on March 8. But before he left, he attended a ladies' meeting in the Purda Garden, and then came to my house for a few minutes. He wrote in my diary these words "Make your heart strong".

Bapu came to Delhi again on the 19th March before proceeding to Karachi to attend the Congress Session. He interviewed the Viceroy, and discussed the release of political prisoners. Sardar Patel was now the President-elect. Gandhiji started for Karachi on the night of the 23rd by special train, accompanied by me. Just as he entered his compartment, news was conveyed to him that Sardar Bhagat Singh, with two of his companions, had been hanged in the Lahore Jail that evening. Bapu had done his level best for the release of Sardar Bhagat Singh and he never expected that he would be hanged so soon. He was thus naturally shocked to receive this sad news. As is the way of a mob, it vented its disappointment and anger on the most convenient scapegoat, in this case, our dear Bapu! They broke the window panes and entered his compartment, and began to harass and bully him. Bapu suffered their anger with great patience. On the third day, when he reached Karachi, he was welcomed with black flags, and black flowers were presented to him as a token of frustration. Gandhiji, referring to this incident, delievered an effective speech in the Congress Pandal on the 26th, and used it to explain the importance of non-violence. He said, "They might kill me, but they cannot kill Gandhism. If truth can be killed, Gandhism can be killed. If non-violence can be killed, Gandhism can be killed. For what is Gandhism but the winning of Swaraj by means of truth and non-violence?"

The journey to and from Karachi was a never-to-be-forgotten event in my life. The evil mood of the masses had turned. Thousands of people now came to every halt to have Gandhiji's Darshan, as of old. In their love, people would not let him sleep. Acharya Kripalani, who travelled with us was in a humorous frame of mind. He pretended to be a Mahatma as he had long hair and asked us to point him out

for Darshan! Cooked food, fruit, and milk was brought to us in such an abundance that we were literally buried in it. Crowds would ask for Bapu's Prasad and though we kept distributing everything we received, still there was no end to it. All this was a proof of the people's love for Bapu, and their enthusiasm for his achievements towards the goal of Swaraj.

On our journey back from Karachi, his Secretary, Krishnadas, got typhoid fever and I took him to my house to nurse. Bapu came to see him on the 7th of April, and left the same night for Ahmedabad where he stayed at the Gujarat Vidyapith. He would not go to the Ashram which was only a couple of miles from there, owing to the vow he had taken that he would not enter it until he had achieved Independence for India. I went to Ahmedabad in August to see him. One day, somebody wantonly killed a snake. When Bapuji was informed of this happening, he used the incident as an opportunity for addressing the students of Vidyapith and said, "Though most snakes are poisonous, they too are God's creatures. He only knows for what purpose they were created. My knowledge is very limited. We are all playing with death every minute of our lives, and the snake family does likewise. Death can claim us at any moment, so ending our life on this earth. Hence we are not normally justified in killing this creature if it goes its way without harming us. However, we may occasionally kill it in self-defence, as *that* is one of the primary laws of Nature. Undoubtedly, most of us are afraid of it. And this fear will exist until we reach the stage of complete fearlessness. The full achievement of this ideal may be still far off, and we are, at present, imperfect beings. To be quite honest, I myself do not feel any pain when snakes are killed, because fear still lurks in my heart. A snake is akin to a rogue who likes to upset people often needlessly."

Bapuji was appointed India's sole Congress representative to the Round Table Conference to be held in London, and there were talks of his attending it. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was violated by the Government, and under the circumstances he was not willing to go to London to take

part in the Conference. Lord Willingdon had now succeeded Lord Irwin. Bapuji was summoned to Simla to see him. He left Ahmedabad for Simla on the 24th, to interview Lord Willingdon. Gandhiji was finally persuaded to join the R. T. Conference group, and hence returned to Bombay by a special train on the 27th. I went to Faridabad station to meet him and see him off. He left for England at noon on the 29th, accompanied by Mahadev Desai, Pyarelal, Devadas, and Mirabahen. They sailed by the S.S. Rajputana, and reached England on the 12th of September.

After getting Bapu out of the way by sending him to England, Lord Willingdon began showing himself in his true colours. He was bent on crushing the Congress. Dr. Ansari sent me to Ahmedabad to inform Sardar Patel of the Government's intentions, and it was an open secret that Bapu would return empty-handed from the Round Table Conference.

Bapu returned from there on the 28th of December by the S .S. Piltsana. I went to receive him at the pier, and was amazed at the tremendous welcome given him by the city of Bombay. He stayed with one of his old friends at Mani Bhawan, while in town. The very first news he received upon landing was that of Pandit Nehru's arrest and shootings in the Frontier. The Working Committee was held at Mani Bhawan, sessions of which lasted till two or three in the morning. Telegrams were exchanged between Simla and Bombay. Bapuji wanted to see the Viceroy, but the latter was adamant and refused to grant an interview. He was afraid lest Gandhiji managed to catch him also in his snare. At last a resolution was passed on the night of the 31st December reviving Satyagraha, and we all anxiously awaited the arrest of Mahatmaji, which took place on January the 4th, 1932 at 3 a.m.

It happened thus : We had hardly slept a few hours when we were suddenly awakened. We were informed that the police had come to arrest him under Regulation XXV of 1827. Wilson was then the Police Commissioner. He showed the warrant of arrest to Gandhiji and said, " It

is my duty to arrest you." Bapu read the warrant and asked for half an hour for preparation. It was his silence day. He cleaned his mouth and wrote brief messages. The message to the nation was ," Infinite is God's mercy, never swerve from truth and non-violence, never turn your back, and sacrifice your lives and all to win Swaraj." He was ready by 3-45 a.m. His favourite hymn *Vaishnava Jana* was sung. Everybody touched his feet, got his blessing, and bade him farewell. He was taken in a police car to Yeravda Jail. I watched him start from the balcony. Somebody put a tricolour flag behind his car. I left for Delhi the same day.

I witnessed exactly the same scene 10 years later when Bapuji was arrested again on the 9th August, 1942 at Birla House, Bombay. The 'Quit-India' resolution was passed on the 8th August. We had received news in Delhi some days previously that Gandhiji and other Congress leaders were likely to be arrested, and I was especially deputed to take this news to Birla House, where Bapuji was staying. This I did, and conveyed the information to him on the 5th. It was said that he and Shrimati Sarojini Devi were to be placed in the Aga Khan Palace, while the Working Committee members were to be interned in the Ahmednagar Fort. Nobody believed the truth of this information, and it was considered a big joke! I was staying with a friend of mine at Cutch Castle, as was Dr. Ghosh. Early at five my friend woke me up and told me that the police had come. For a while I did not get his meaning, but when I realized the purport of his words I immediately got into a car and drove straight to Birla House. There, I found that the police had already arrived to arrest Bapuji. Everything was ready. Prayers were recited, goodbyes were said and everybody went to the gate to see him off. He was taken by car. So were Mahadevbhai and Mirabahen. This was the last glimpse I had of both Mahadevbhai and Ba, who were arrested the same day.

V

## THREE HISTORICAL FASTS

On reaching Delhi, I joined the movement. The Congress Working Committee was declared illegal, and all members, including Dr. Ansari, were arrested at his residence at Daryaganj. Prior to their arrest, I managed to obtain their autographs which I have preserved to this day.

A notice was served on me interning me in my ward. I defied it, and on February 22, 1932 picketed a foreign cloth shop at the Clock Tower. I was arrested and sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs 500/-. From the Delhi District Jail I was transferred to the New Central Jail at Multan. I was there till August. While in jail, I was allowed to write letters to my dear Mahatmaji and get his in return. This was a great consolation, and somewhat alleviated my enforced incarceration. In his letter dated 10-4-'32, Bapuji wrote :

"I have your letter. You have done well in giving a detailed account of yourself. I consider you lucky to have Dr. Ansari and other persons of such calibre with you. Give Salams and Bandematarams from the three of us to your companions. I presume that the Doctorsaheb has his new set of teeth by now. Your letter of the 3rd instant has not yet come to hand.

"My blessings will encompass you on your 33rd birthday, which more or less completes one-third of man's life span on earth. Let us hope that you may survive the remaining two-thirds, and that all means of serving your fellow men may be available to you. As you have the better kind of Bhavana (desire), I believe that in course of time you will develop the qualities of courage, steadfastness, determination etc. that are so necessary.

"Continue writing to me. I receive regular news of Devadas, but there is no news of Krishnan Nair. I am keeping very fit, so also Sardar Vallabhbhai and Mahadev. For the last two months I have given up drinking milk, and instead eat almonds. I also take Roti, one vegetable, and a

lemon. I am maintaining the same weight that I was when I came here, i.e., 106 lbs.

"I finished *Gita-Kosh* last year. Now I am writing Ashram History. I also rest, and spin.

Bapu's Blessings."

Besides writing to me, Gandhiji used to send weekly letters to other Ashramites as well. These were later published in book form.† During his imprisonment he constructed a new type of spinning wheel, called the Yeravda Chakra.

Released from jail, I went to Deolali, near Nasik, for a change. There, I heard that Bapuji planned to fast from September 20, as a protest against the Communal Award granted by the then Prime Minister, Mr MacDonald, giving separate electorates to the Scheduled Castes. On receipt of this news I forthwith proceeded to Poona. The Government desired to release Gandhiji, with certain conditions, which he, however, refused to accept. He therefore commenced at twelve noon on the appointed date, "a fast unto death without food of any kind, save water with or without salt and soda". On that day millions in India offered prayers and fasted also, as a token of sympathy for him and the cause he championed. Pyarelalji and I visited him that evening in jail. He was placidly seated in a chair in the jail office. I met him now after an interval of eight and a half months, for I had last seen him when he was arrested in Bombay on January 4th. He looked very cheerful and said, "I hope you are not agitated, but are at peace." As usual, he was cheerful and kept laughing frequently at some joke or the other. When we were ready to leave he asked us to come at just the same time on the following day.

We again visited him the next day. We found that he had been shifted to a separate ward, and was lying on his bed looking rather exhausted. Sardar Patel and Mahadevbhai were also with him. Just opposite to the Yeravda Jail was the Female Jail; so Shrimati Sarojini Naidu was allowed to visit Bapu daily and spend some time with him.

† Published under the title of *From Yeravda Mandir* by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. Price As. 8, postage etc., As. 3.

That day, when Bapu prepared to do his quota of spinning, he jokingly told her that he would like to ask her to spin on his behalf. She promptly replied that her thumb was aching. Hearing this, Bapu laughed and said that just as in East India Company's days, weavers of Bengal cut their thumbs in order to defy the authority of the Company, so did she seem nervous and afraid of him, or she would not offer a painful thumb as an excuse to avoid spinning! We thought this both amusing and apt, and joined in the laughter at Shrimati Naidu's expense.

There was no restriction on jail visitors. Hence, a continuous stream of visitors poured in from morning to evening to have his Darshan. On one occasion some of Meherbaba's followers came to see Gandhiji with a message from the former to the effect that if Bapu could continue his fast for forty days, he would be enabled to see God with the aid of Meherbaba's blessing. Bapu said that it would be a breach of faith on his part as his fast was only a token against separate electorate for the Harijans, and that as soon as his demand to waive this condition was accepted, he would give up fasting. Bapu also said that he had considered taking this step for quite a long time, but he never did a thing unless his inner voice commanded him to do so. But when it did, the decision was made, and he immediately commenced to fast.

In this instance, the fast continued for seven days, and we both were allowed to stay in jail to nurse him. Though Bapu got weaker each day, yet he did not give up spinning. Shrimati Kasturba, who was also in jail, was allowed to stay with him. Bapuji lay on his bed which was placed under a mango tree in the courtyard. He could now drink water only with great difficulty, as nausea had begun. He got very little rest, since people with diverse opinions came to visit him — throughout the day — and discuss various topics. As he had to argue with them in order to convince them he became exhausted by continuous talking. For full five days these discussions went on, especially between him, certain Hindu leaders, and Dr. Ambedkar. One day, in the course of conversation, he said that when a

man is born, he comes to earth with a fixed number of breaths allotted to him by God. These he *has* to take in his life time, and they constitute his age. Bapu believes this to be true. The sooner we exhaust our Pranashakti, the nearer we approach death. On the other hand, if we husband our breath we also can to some extent postpone death to a later date. Death is predestined for every single person, but there is the question of correct expenditure of these allotted number of breaths. For instance, if we spent all our money at one stroke we would become bankrupt. So also with the time we have on this earth. The sooner we use up our vitality and energy, through a useless speeding up of life-processes, the sooner will we have to leave our material bodies behind, and render an account to our Maker.

Bapu's condition became critical on the 7th day. His blood pressure mounted up. Anxiety was visible on every face. Doctors too were agitated. Though the Pact had been signed on the 24th, and its written acceptance was expected at any moment yet the document had not come from London, and we all were becoming anxious, as Bapu now only weighed 92 lbs., and every bone in his body was visible. He was so weak that he was even forbidden to move about. Since the day on which he had been shifted to this ward, he had been lying under that mango tree in the open, with the sky as his roof and was doing his Tapasya like Lord Buddha.

The meeting between Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and the Mahatma was a sight worth remembering. Gurudev, bent with age and covered by a long flowing cloak proceeded step by step very slowly to greet Gandhiji, who was lying in bed. Bapuji raised himself up a little bit, and affectionately embraced Tagore, and then began to comb his white beard with his shaking fingers, like a child. Soon afterwards he was exhausted, and went to sleep.

At last, that same evening the Inspector-General of Prisons brought a letter from Government House containing the news that the British Government had accepted the terms of the settlement. Bapu slowly read the letter and

handed it over to Sardar Patel for perusal. Pondering over its contents for a while, he decided that it was all right to break his fast, which he proceeded to do, as soon as the necessary preparations were made to break the fast: Firstly the great poet sang a song in Bengali. Secondly, Mantras from the Upanishads were chanted, followed by the famous Gujarati Bhajan *Vaishnava Jana*, and it was only after this that Bapu broke his fast at 5 p.m. by taking Mosambi (Sweet Lime) juice served to him by Shrimati Kasturba. Sweets and fruit were freely distributed to all creating a regular festive atmosphere on that happy occasion.

It was now the 26th of September and although Bapuji had broken his fast, he was still very weak. Both Pyarelal and I were permitted from this date onwards to stay in jail with him at night also as he would require help. It was, I think, the first occasion on which anybody was allowed to stay in jail without being sentenced.

I was surprised to see the freedom to come and go which had been accorded to visitors. I was wondering whether we were actually in jail, or whether a free Durbar was being held by Bapu who acted like a beloved ruler, whose every command was instantly and literally carried out.

The next day was the 27th — Bapu's birthdate. On the Hindu Calendar it was *Rentiya Baras*. From 6 a.m. visitors began to pour in. The Jail Superintendent's wife was the first visitor; she brought lovely flowers as an offering. Journalists, relatives and friends then began dropping in, one after the other, throughout the day and the ward was full of flowers and fruits. It tired Bapu.

We stayed in jail for three days during which he slowly began to regain his health. On the 30th, it was announced by the Government that all facilities given to relatives and friends of Gandhiji had been withdrawn, and hence we should leave the jail by evening. We obeyed, and took our departure with Bapu's blessings. Just before taking leave, I asked his advice regarding what my future

activities should be, but he declined to tender any, gently saying that as long as he was a prisoner he could not properly do so. This demonstrates Gandhiji's sense of fair play. He asked me to do whatever I thought best in the circumstances.

On the 3rd of December I heard that Bapu had once again gone on a fast. I became anxious and immediately sent him a telegram enquiring about his health. In return, I got word that the fast had been given up, and that there was no cause for anxiety. I was much relieved. In this connection I also received a letter from him dated the 9th December, in which he wrote, " I had to undergo a fast, and that too is now a thing of the past. A little weakness remains but that will slowly disappear. Fasting has become a constant and unavoidable part of my life. Those who live near me should know me sufficiently well not to be unduly agitated on that account. Have faith and believe that my body will not perish until God has taken all the service required from it."

Bapu was still in jail. Though the Satyagraha movement was declining in strength, yet people kept courting arrest. I offered Satyagraha on the 26th January, 1933, — Independence Day — and was convicted for three months and once again sent to the New Central Jail, Multan which I had visited on a previous occasion ! This time also I got occasional letters from Bapu while I was in jail. On my birthday he wrote, " My blessings are with you. God will guide you along your chosen path, and will help you to remain balanced in your outlook and free from earthly attachments." Yeravda, 23-3-'33.

In the last week of April, 1933 it was again reported that Bapuji contemplated going on a self-purificatory fast. I was exceedingly perturbed by this news. My release was expected a few days hence. I prayed that I might reach him before he commenced his fast. I was released on May 4th, and passing through Delhi, I met my family members, and went straight on to Poona, reaching there on the 8th.

Bapu had already began his 21 days' fast. I met him in the same mango tree barrack. In those days all his companions were with him in jail. After seeing him I returned to Parna Kuti which belonged to his hostess, Lady Thakersey. It was about 9 o'clock that same night when I saw three cars entering the bungalow gates. When I reached the first car as it came to a stop I found, to my great surprise, Bapuji getting out of it. The Government, fearing his death from these frequent fasts of his, released him. Shrimati Sarojini Devi was also released. He at once issued a statement to the public and postponed the C. D. Movement for another six weeks.

Each night, before going to sleep he gave me his diary to bring it up-to-date and to keep it safe. He asked me to sleep just near his bed and to attend to his wants if he woke up. I slept as instructed, and also carried out his requests. Bapu entrusted much of his work to me. The sacred memories of those three weeks will always be treasured by me.

In many respects, he was very strict, and insisted that no one should visit him at the cost of his work. A worker once came to him and offered his service, but he was not allowed to stay. Shri Dhurandharji, who assisted me, and I were the only two who were allowed to wait on him. Shrimati Sarojini Devi, who had been released along with Bapuji, took it upon herself to attend to some of his other work, while Mathuradas Trikamji was in charge of his vast correspondence. Dr. Dinshah Mehta who had his Nature Cure Clinic in Poona was called to give him massage.

No sooner was he out of jail than he began to participate in politics, but while in jail he was adamant about not giving advice on political matters to any one. He always stuck to this principle, even though he had plenty of opportunities to depart from it. In 1924, on the 12th January, when he was operated upon for appendicitis and his condition had become so serious that nobody knew what would happen to him, Shri Shrinivas Shastri, who had come to see him, pressed him for a message to his countrymen. But he was surprisingly firm on the subject, and said, " I am a

prisoner of the Government now and as such must scrupulously observe the prisoner's code of honour. While in jail, I am dead — as far as politics are concerned! I am supposed to be ignorant of outside events, and hence cannot have anything to tell, or do with the public. I have no message to give." Illustrating how much control he had over his mind he once said that he had separate compartments in his mind. Only that subject, with which he wished to deal, came up before it; the rest remained closed behind his mind's windows till needed. So immense was his self-control!

From the very day following the commencement of his fast, Bapuji began to feel weak, giddy and nauseated. This time he was able to spin only for two days. He had just begun to spin on the 3rd day, when he felt a severe vomitting sensation and such complete weakness that he had to give it up, though with great reluctance. The yarn spun by him during these first two days is still with me, kept in sacred memory of him.

Two more — Balkrishna Kalelkar and Harihar Sharma — joined me in looking after him. Drs. Ansari, Jivraj Mehta, and Deshmukh were his medical advisers. Later on, they were joined by Dr. B. C. Roy. By now Bapu had grown very weak. All the while he was in bed his eyes were closed in deep meditation. Kaka Kalelkar would recite the Gita to him. Lord Krishna's picture was placed in front of him and incense and perfume sticks were lighted before the picture. Portions from Tulsidas' Ramayana were also recited during the day and in the evening; after prayers, simple songs were sung. He was so engrossed in thoughts of God that he lost interest in everything else. He had also stopped shaving. When Devadas suggested to him to have a shave, Gandhiji answered, "I am trying to forget the body entirely. I am only thinking of Ramanama now. Let the shave come in the third week of the fast, or even on the last day."

Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi came to join him after her release from the Sabarmati jail, and a few days later

Shri Mahadev Desai was also released. Gandhiji's 21 days fast, which had caused much anxiety, ended on the 29th of May. In three weeks he lost 22 lbs. and his weight came down to 80½ lbs. He was reduced to a mere skeleton, and it was with much difficulty and fear that we turned him from one side to the other. But he was at peace and always kept meditating on God. Recitations from the Upanishads, the Gita, and the Ramayana were his spiritual and mental food those days.

It was on the morning of the 29th May, 1933 that Dr. Dinshah gave him his shave. Bapuji had prohibited everybody from photographing him during his fast, but on that day Dr. Dinshah took his first photograph. It was an excellent likeness of Bapu at his best. Mahadevbhai celebrated the occasion by reciting the whole Gita to him. Then Drs. Ansari, B. C. Roy and Gilder examined him. Exactly at 12 noon Ramadhun began, after which some verses from the Koran were read by Dr. Ansari, and this was followed by a Christian hymn. Prayers from the Parsee Scriptures were offered and Kakasaheb Kalelkar chanted some Mantras from the Sanskrit Scriptures. Mahadevbhai sang a Bengali song composed by Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore.

At the end of this religious ceremony Bapu's familiar Bhajan *Vaishnava Jana* was sung, and then the Mahatma dictated a message as follows to Mahadevbhai in his slow and feeble voice :

" Within a minute or two I am going to break the fast. In His name and with faith in Him it was observed ; in His name it terminates. My faith is not less today, but more. You will not expect me to make a speech at this time, for it is an occasion for taking the name of God and singing His glory. But I must not forget to mention the Doctors and other friends who have poured out their affection on me during these days of privilege and grace. I cannot help referring to their services because it is part of God's mercy to me. I have nothing but thanks to give them. God alone can give them a fitting reward. I am glad that some Harijan friends are here with us today. I do not know exactly what

work God expects of me now. But whatever it may be, I know that He will give me the strength to do it." (*Harijan*, 3-6-33, p. 5)

At 12-27 Ba gave him 2 ounces of orange juice to drink. Thus by the grace of God did his Mahayajna of twenty-one days pass off peacefully. Everybody breathed a sigh of relief and thanked God. But a few other incidents which occurred during those days are also worth mentioning :

One day, Bapu unexpectedly asked me, 'Who cleaned my commode ? " I told him that as I was otherwise engaged the sweeper had come in my absence and cleaned it, though usually I did it. He asked me to be more careful in future and not to extract work from servants !

It was my custom to air on the following day the mattress which Bapu used the previous day. Thus, two mattresses were required, but Bapu had only one, made of Khadi, and there was no other Khadi mattress in Parna Kuti. So I began to use a mill-made mattress, covered by a Khadi bed-sheet, for the second one which was needed. Gandhiij's over-alert eye fell on that mill-made mattress, and he immediately asked me why a mill-made one was used for him in direct contradiction of his orders. I explained the situation myself, but Bapu could not be convinced. He was deeply pained, and said that when he had implicit faith in me, and had left everything to me, should I wound him in this way ? I felt thoroughly ashamed, and still cannot forget the reprimand I received for what I had done, though with the best of intentions.

I was engaged in nursing him, while another colleague of mine was entrusted with looking after his visitors. Though the Mahatma had broken his fast, he was still very weak. Nobody was allowed to see him without the previous consent of my colleague. One day, happening to pass the visitors' room, I saw a very old and completely blind Parsee gentleman sitting with his grand-daughter. They insisted on receiving Gandhiji's Darshan. Touched by his devotion, I took him to Bapu's room. Reaching the entrance,

I pointed to Gandhiji and said that he was lying in bed, just opposite to him, though the poor man was unable to see. On hearing that he was standing just opposite to Bapu, he prostrated himself on the ground, and touched it with his forehead, to greet Bapu, and a stream of joyful tears flowed from his eyes. Seeing that sight, I pondered how it was that those of us who lived with Bapu, all twenty-four hours of the day, had become so stone-hearted, that we would not allow such faithful devotees (Bhaktas) to have his Darshan. Was it that as with the idols in a temple, the priests become emotionless and have no consideration for true devotion to God, so also had we who lived near Bapu become insensitive to the feelings of others ? Was this why Bapu said that those who lived far far away from him, and who had never met him in their lives were nearer to him than those who always surrounded him ?

On the completion of Bapu's fast, I developed slight temperature and was sent to Dr. Dinshah Mehta's Clinic for treatment. A few days after this, Gandhiji convened an informal Conference of Congressmen to meet on the 12th July. Delegates from all parts of India were invited to it. I was also one of the invitees — as a delegate from Delhi — but Bapu never approved of any one of his companions attending any conference whatsoever without first getting his permission. But who did not desire to hear Bapu speak ? Living so near him the temptation to attend the Conference was strong. So, as an invitee I attended the Conference without first getting his permission. It was not easy to escape his roving and observant eye, and, as a matter of fact, I did not desire to escape it either. I did not seek his permission, because I was doubtful of his granting it as I was supposed to be in hospital. When the Conference was over, I reported myself to him. He inquired after my health and asked how I felt. Then he wanted to know how I happened to be at the Conference. I replied that I was an invitee to the Conference, and had come as a delegate from Delhi. He said, laughingly, that if he could represent thirty-three million Indians at the Round Table Conference in England, was he not capable of representing me

there? Hearing this, I felt abashed, and since that day I lost all interest in attending conferences and public meetings. Afterwards whenever A. I. C. C. meetings at which Gandhiji was to speak were held either at Delhi or Bombay I never attended them. And if it was imperative that I should, then I obtained his previous permission. And now when he is no more, I have lost even that interest, and life is a void for me.

Bapuji left Poona on July 18, 1933, for Ahmedabad. I was told to remain behind to continue my treatment. At Ahmedabad he inaugurated a campaign of individual Civil Disobedience, and disbanded the Sabarmati Ashram on July 26. He had intended to commence marching into the Ras village on August 1, but at the dead of previous night he was arrested, together with 34 other inmates of the Ashram, and was transferred to the Yeravda Jail as was Mahadev Desai. On August 4th at 9 a.m., he was served with a notice to leave the Yeravda village, which he disobeyed, and he was then sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

I went to Poona from Bombay for a few days. There I got news that Bapu had again undertaken a fast commencing on August 16, and that the Government this time was making things rather difficult for him. It had withdrawn all the facilities which it had provided him for publishing his weekly paper, the *Harijan*. And hence, Gandhiji showed his disapproval of their course of action by going on a fast. His condition was becoming critical. On the 20th, the 5th day of his fast, he was removed to the Sasoon Hospital. Meanwhile Deenabandhu C. F. Andrews was trying hard for his release. At last on the 23rd August — the 8th day of his fast — Bapuji was released and immediately taken to Parna Kuti. He had grown very weak and would probably have died if he had not been released at this particular time. He said that his providential release was a miracle of God. He never expected it, as the Government was determined to have done with him once and for all, and did not care what the world thought or said. They felt that if Gandhi died, a thorn with much nuisance

value would be removed forever, but public opinion and pressure was so great that they had finally to yield, and reluctantly released him.

Bapuji also said that this time he had planned to take Maun Samadhi because he considered it to be the only method of obtaining lasting peace. By strictly observing it, one could shed his physical body without the least help from anybody or without causing trouble to others. Shri Andrews persuaded him to desist from taking this most drastic step.

Upon his release, he made the following statement :

" God's ways are inscrutable. The most unexpected event of my life has just occurred, though I have been used to the most surprising and un-looked for things happening in the course of a very long public life. What is now in store for me ? How shall I make use of this freedom from jail ? I do not know. But whether in prison or outside, service in the Harijan cause is dearest to my heart, and is the very breath of my life, more precious even than daily bread. I can live for some days at least without food, but I cannot live without Harijan service for one single minute. It is my constant prayer to the Almighty that this blot of untouchability may be removed, in its entirety, from Hinduism, and that the millions of caste Hindus may see the light of the truth which shines upon us. If we only would remove the scales from our eyes, which shut out reality, we would see the absurdity of the practice of untouchability. My life is dedicated to this cause, and I shall consider no penance too great for the vindication of this truth through the columns of the *Harijan*. I have repeatedly entreated all of you, my countrymen, to see the error of your ways, and to co-operate with me in fighting for this noble and worthwhile goal." (*Harijan*, 26-8-'33, p. 1)

From Poona, Gandhiji left for Wardha. From there he started on the 7th of November, for an All-India tour in the cause of Harijan uplift. In about ten months he covered every province of India and collected eight lakhs of rupees

for the Harijan fund ! A great achievement, and one which could be done only by a man such as he was.

In the third week of November — a few weeks after my return from Poona — I fell very ill. Gandhiji was informed of my illness. In one of my letters to him I complained that there was nobody in my house who was capable of reading the Bhagwadgita correctly to me. To this, I received a letter from him dated 26-11-'33 in which he wrote as follows :

"I have your letter. I immediately sent a wire to Dr. Ansari, informing him of your condition. He must have seen you by now. What a pity that there is nobody in your house, who can recite the Gita correctly....The best way is to recite Ramanama as prescribed by Tulsidas. There is no need to learn Ramanama by heart. Once you have started chanting it, it becomes known by rote — almost automatically, provided that you realize its meaning and believe in it. Consider Ramanama the only sovereign remedy for you. If you survive this illness, make it a point to have the small children of the house learn the Gita. What more shall I write ? You are constantly in my thoughts, and I wish you a speedy recovery."

He was expected at Delhi in connection with his Harijan tour. He arrived there on December 10, and as he got off the train he was informed of my rather serious condition by a friend of mine. Bapuji drove straight to my house to see me. He sat on my bed. I had grown very weak, and it was with great difficulty that I could stretch my hands to touch his feet, as I had high fever at the time. Dr. Ansari was treating me. He too was worried about my state of health, especially as he considered me like a son. Bapu advised me to continue the treatment I was taking. He told me that the doctor was a God-fearing man, and if I died in his hands, it would be a blessing in disguise. He told me not to bother about the future. " Give up all anxiety, repeat Ramanama and surrender yourself completely to Him ", he said.

No sooner had I touched Bapu's feet than my illness took a turn for the better. He stayed for five days in Delhi,

from December 10 to 14. He observed silence on Monday, but even on that day he came to see me and sat by my side for ten minutes. He gave me Ramanama Upadesh by writing it on a piece of paper. On the 12th December he had the doctors thoroughly examine me in his presence. Gandhiji was unable to visit me the next day, but on the 14th, just before his departure from Delhi, he came again, and infused new life into me. I began slowly to regain my strength and health, and ever since then I have considered that I owe my life to him.

An interesting thing, of similar nature, occurred in 1931. I had a doctor friend. His wife suffered from T. B. She had had no sleep for several days. She told her husband that if she could get Ganga water blessed by Gandhiji's hands, she would get her sleep back. My friend wrote to me, and I put the matter before Bapu, who refused to comply at the beginning. He said that such things encouraged superstition. But when friends pressed him, he consented and Ganga water touched by his hand, at last was sent to the patient, who immediately began to get natural sleep. Was it a miracle brought about by Gandhiji, or was it due to the patient's own strong faith ? Who can say ?

Gandhiji temporarily suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement on April 7, 1934, and asked everyone to do as much as possible in the Harijan cause instead. An attempt was made by an unknown person to throw a bomb on his car on June 25, while he was on his way to Poona to attend a public function. The assassin, however, mistook another car for Bapu's and seven other persons were injured.

In one of his letters, from South India, while on tour, he wrote :

"Family ties are not a sin, nor is it a sin to earn money. To limit family ties is also a sort of service. One, who adheres to Satya in his field of activity, is also doing service. He who is engaged in service, but who at the same time indulges in sexual pleasures, selfishness etc. is not doing any real service, but does harm instead. Moreover,

he is a hypocrite. It is wrong to say that money cannot be earned in an honest fashion and with truth as a guiding principle. Many earn money quite honestly.

4-6-'34 Bapu's Blessings."

Reaching Wardha Gandhiji again went on another fast, much to people's consternation. This one lasted seven days, from 7th to 14th August, 1934, and was undertaken as penance for the intolerance shown by rival factions towards one another while engaged in Harijan work. I very much desired to go to him and serve him, but he flatly refused, and wrote me a letter in which he said, "I am sorry that you show so much impatience. How can I encourage it? You should have self-control in these matters too. What service would you render by coming here? The Ashram is full of male and female Sevaks. I have forbidden all these companions of mine scattered in various parts of India and who are serving me better by remaining where they are and doing what they have been told rather than by coming here. Among them are Drs. Mehta and B. C. Roy. How can I then permit you?"

On the 24th October, 1934, the Annual Congress Session was held at Bombay. I asked his permission to take part in it, but he did not allow me to. He wrote:

"What will you be able to achieve by coming to Bombay? Do you want to fall ill again? Why do you wish to give up the peace and quiet of Mussoorie? Remain there, spin more, and introspect still more. Make your body healthy. But even in this don't overdo things. I am preventing everybody from attending.

Wardha, 25-9-'34 Bapu's Blessings."

It was at this particular Session that Gandhiji severed all connections with the Congress and ceased to be even a four-anna member of it. He threw himself into the work of reviving and developing village industries, and on October 26th formed the All India Village Industries Association with its object as the "revival, encouragement and improvement of village industries, and the moral and physical advancement of the villages of India".

## VI

## HARIJAN NIWAS

Bapuji came to Delhi on December 29, 1934 for a month and stayed at the Harijan Niwas, which had just been opened at Kingsway. Only one pucca house in this colony was as yet ready, and this was placed at Bapu's disposal. Tents were pitched for his companions, and I was to look after all the arrangements in consultation with Professor N. R. Malkani, who was in charge of the colony. It was so very cold that year that water used to freeze at night. It was many years since Gandhiji had deigned to spend so long a period at India's proud Capital !

This was the period in Gandhiji's life when he was keenly interested in the All India Village Industries Association (A. I. V. I. A.). This interest was to continue till his death in 1948. He had asked the Professor to arrange a hut for his stay, but when he saw the pucca building he took him to task, and said that a simple kutcha hut, with grass-thatched roof, was all he had in mind, and had expected to find there. Malkaniji made excuses but Bapu was not convinced, and said that the learned Professor had forgotten that as he was a representative of simple Harijans and humble villagers he had no business to spend so much money on his stay, as it was neither appropriate nor necessary.

In the evening came my turn for a sharp rebuke from him. He had asked me to get a spittoon for him. A newly-bought Muradabadi spittoon was placed on his table by a friend of mine, who was assisting me in the arrangements. That was the signal for the final attack. " Who ordered it, and why was it purchased ? " " I asked for one, and I thought it would be borrowed from some one ", was my meek reply. " But did you not also know that if it could not be immediately borrowed, the friends in the town were sure to purchase

it ?" "I knew, but I had not thought that they would buy a thing costing a rupee-and-a-half. I should have gone in for one costing four annas or so", was my halting reply. "And you would not have minded spending four annas? Well send this back at once. I shall be satisfied with a small earthen cup which costs almost nothing. I thought that by now you would instinctively understand my point of view about these things. Well, now let me tell you that if anything is purchased again without my permission, I might be driven to non-co-operation with you."

And this was not all! At night a tape cot was brought for his use, but Gandhiji objected to that too! "No bedstead is necessary. A cotton mattress over a mat is quite enough. Not that I should object to using a cot, if health made it absolutely imperative, but I shall do without it as long as I can."

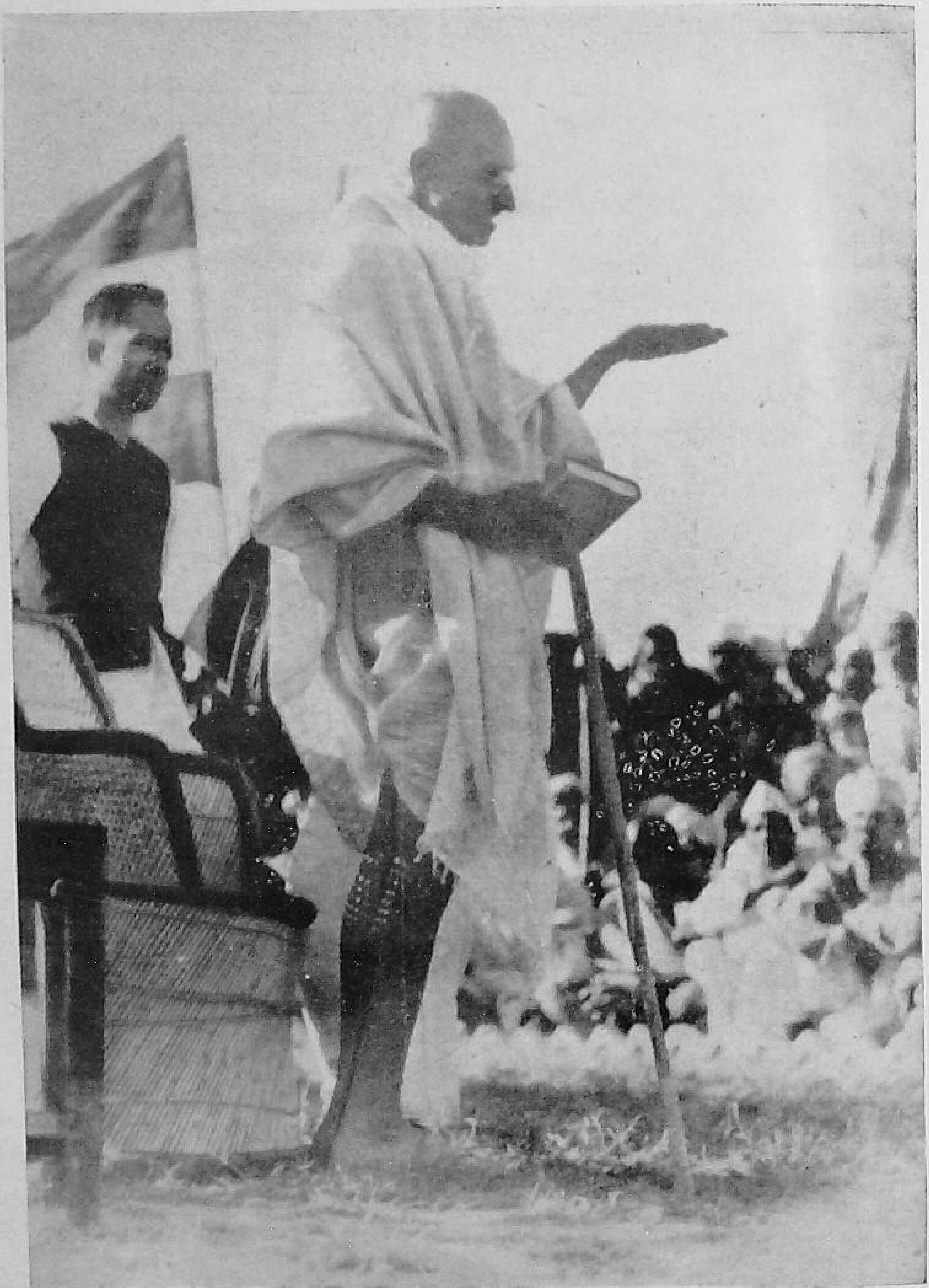
"But Bapu, even the poorest villagers have got their Charpais", said Malkani in desperation. "I know, I know. Does that mean that we should imitate them in that convenient matter when we cannot possibly imitate them in other things? If we cannot live like them but must have better food and better clothings, let us at least have the poor consolation of doing without a bedstead." (*Harijan*, 11-1-'35, p. 378)

This was sufficient warning for me. I now kept a close watch on every pie spent and he would ask account of everything in detail. What was the price of different vegetables? How much did food cost? How many guests were fed daily? What food were they served? etc. etc.

He also laid great stress on eating hand-pounded, unpolished rice, and hand-grounded flour for both economic and health reasons. A branch of the A. I. V. I. Association was started in Delhi to stimulate the consumption of such products.

On the 2nd of January, 1935 Gandhiji laid the foundation stone of Harijan Niwas. Speaking on this memorable occasion he said:

"Remember that we are the debtors and the Harijans are the creditors. We have until today, delighted in



Bapu in Delhi Harijan Niwas

mounting their backs like the famed and legendary Old Man of the Sea. We have exacted labour from them, have not scrupled to belabour them, and even to kill them when they raised a voice in protest of our ways. The poor folk would seem to have been born in order to toil and moil for us. We have been guilty of a heinous sin, and it is time we made amends for it. It is for this purpose that the Sangh has been created. We have a stupendous moral and ethical readjustment to make, but it has to be done in the interests of our fellow countrymen. I have said it several times before and shall repeat again today that unless we discharge our debt, Hinduism will perish. Untouchability must be destroyed, or else it will destroy Hinduism." (*Harijan*, 11-1-'35, p. 384)

During his stay in Harijan Niwas, Gandhiji met two great personalities: Dr. Maude Royden and Begum M. Halide Edibe Hanum. A report of the Begum Saheb's talk is taken from the weekly, *Harijan* of January 25th, 1935, p. 399:

"How will you fight the curse of mechanization, Gandhiji? How will you keep human beings human?"

"All this is implied in my non-violence, Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, and giving back to the villagers what belongs to them, Harijan activity, and the movement for the revival of village industries. The desire to fight in the aid of these worthy causes comes naturally to me because of my principle of non-violence. It is cruel, it is sinful to think of mechanization in a country of 350 million human beings. Every human being is a machine, only it should be kept well oiled and in proper trim. That is what I am trying to do."

"Political freedom, I am sure, you are going to win. But mechanization, I am afraid, might get hold of India", said the Begum.

"Then there is no escape from violence. I saw its approach as long ago as 1908, and ever since then I have shaped all my activities in terms of non-violence. Complete mechanization is impossible in India without its resulting in violence in some shape or other."

During Gandhiji's stay at Harijan Niwas a few more interesting things happened, an extract of which I give in Mahadevbhai's words from the *Harijan*:

There came during the week a villager — an old man, clad in clothes made of cotton-padded Khadi, with a gift for Gandhiji. He sat with the rest of the crowd waiting for him to come out of the building, so that he too could obtain Bapu's Darshan. But when he had waited fairly long, he became apprehensive lest he should, after all, miss Bapu, so he just came in for an assurance that he should surely get a minute or two, sometime during the day, from the Mahatma, for he had a thousand rupees to give to Gandhiji to help him in his good work. And all he wanted in return was a sight of his face and his blessings. I could not believe my ears. He was a poor peasant, and it must have been his life's savings that he planned to give away in this manner!

"Will you have to send the amount, or have you got it on you?", I asked.

"Of course, I have it with me", he replied.

He was taken upstairs as soon as Gandhiji was free to see him. The neatly dressed old man placed before him ten tidy wads of currency notes with the words "This is for the poorest and the most deserving. You know who they are better than anyone else."

"That's very good of you", said Gandhiji. "But how many years' savings does this sum represent?"

"Many years. I would probably have had even more to give you, Bapuji, but for the fact that I sent a hundred rupees for the earthquake fund; a hundred to the Assam Relief; and, in Allahabad — four years ago — I gave Rs 500 for peasant uplift."

"Oh", exclaimed Gandhiji, agreeably surprised, "then tell me what your salary was, and what is your pension now? And what was your job?"

"I was a school-master, and my salary was Rs 52 a month. I get no pension; when I retired, after many years I was given a gratuity of Rs 2,700."

" And how long ago did you retire ? ", was Bapu's next question. " Five years ago ", he answered.

" And how much do you spend on your own living ? "
" Oh, on my living ? not much."

" But still one has to live. Tell me, how much do you need ? "

The villager then replied, rather hesitatingly, as if he did not wish to go into details, " A little Dal and Roti does not cost much. I can do with Rs 10/- monthly. I have no one to take care of. I used to have a nephew, whom I supported and educated, but now I am free. I run a Sanskrit School to which I devote most of my time now. It is free."

" So you saved a few thousands out of your meagre salary, and have devoted it to the service of the poor. A great thing ! How I wish that others would take a lesson from you and do the same ! "

" Yes, Mahatmaji. I have spent very little on myself, and often have been able to give away most of what I had to the poor."

" And where did you get this Khadi ? " asked Gandhiji, as he admired his neatly padded clothing, which did not need to be supplemented by shawls or blankets for additional warmth.

" It is home-made Khadi ", proudly replied he.

" You make me both envy and admire ", said Gandhiji, for he often wondered whether he ought to use the beautiful rich shawls given him by kind friends, such as Pandit Malaviya and others.

" I still have some savings left, Mahatmaji ", continued this gentle old man, his face suffused with the joy of giving. " I shall bring all that, some other time. I do not know to what worthy cause to donate the money. I know you, and you know the poorest who deserve help, and hence will put the money to the best use. I am deeply thankful that you accept this small offering."

As he left, he touched Gandhiji's feet in obeisance. Then he was gone, but he had left behind an abiding inspiration. (*Harijan*, 1-2-'35, p. 409)

Despite his crowded programme, Gandhiji decided, during the last week of our stay in Delhi, to devote a few hours for the next three days to villages in the neighbourhood. On the first such day he drove to Narela, where Shri Krishnan Nair, and his friends were running an Ashram. He walked through the insanitary streets of the village, peeped into people's houses, addressed a meeting, and thence walked to another village. That visitor from abroad, Begum Halide Edibe Hanum of Turkey, who was a great admirer of Bapu's, also accompanied him in order to get some idea of what an average Indian village was like.

Three more villages were visited, in the same manner, the next day, but the experiment of walking had to be abandoned, as painful lesion under one of Gandhiji's toes made it impossible. On the third and last day, his condition being no better, he had to content himself with merely delivering certain set speeches everywhere, and therefore was unable to get into as close contact with the villagers as personal talks and discussions with a few picked individuals would have brought about.

Once, while out on our usual morning walk a dilapidated bullock-cart passed us. Three farmers were sitting on its bare, loosely-constructed split-bamboo seat. One of them pointed to a group of tents and asked us if they were part of the Gandhi camp. On replying in the affirmative, he jumped off the cart and began walking with us. " Is it a fact that you are setting up a tannery here, and that high-caste Hindus will get Rs 50 a month ? " he asked. " Who told you that ? " was my question. Then I said, " There is, indeed, going to be a tannery, but there will be no caste, class, or economic distinctions in it regarding workers. There will be Harijan boys who will be taught tanning, shoe-making, and other industries, and there will be just a few non-Harijan Hindus who will serve and instruct them."

" That is right, but we were told Brahmans would get a higher wage."

" Brahmans in a tannery ? " I asked in surprise. Someone has, evidently, been pulling your leg."

" So ! This is Mahatmaji's colony, and there will be no untouchability here ? "

" That is right ", I replied. " But let me know who you are."

" We are Brahmans."

" So you don't believe in untouchability, and you will do tanning ? "

" Certainly."

" Is there no untouchability in your village ? How far is it from here ? "

" A few Kos. I can't say there is no untouchability." (In this at least the man was honest.) " But three or four of us are ready to take up any job offered us here."

" Even tanning ? "

" Without a doubt. We have now shed our belief in untouchability. Besides, there is stark unemployment. What shall we eat, if we do not work ? And if Harijans can do tanning, why not we ? "

" Splendid ", said I. " But remember there will be no distinction made between Brahmans and Harijans. All those who are trained and pass out as certified tanners will have the same opportunities, regardless of caste. No Rs 40/- for Brahmans, and Rs 10/- for Harijans, mind you."

" I quite see. How long will it be before the tannery is opened, and trainees accepted ? "

" Six months or so, at the outside."

" We shall apply."

The next morning a rather unsophisticated visitor called on Gandhiji. He had a little tin-box, a small rolled-up bedding, and wore a coarse Khadi vest, a Khadi cap and a Khadi Dhoti. He rushed at and clung to Bapu's feet and would not move. With difficulty we pried him away and saw that tears were rolling down his cheeks — exemplifying a picture of Bunyan's Christian ! In meeting Gandhiji, he seemed to have achieved his goal, and cast off a load, and thus was now weeping for joy.

But he soon composed himself, and with a couple of keys opened the little tin-box, taking out his copy of the Gita. From it he pulled out a hundred-rupee currency note from a wad he had pressed between its leaves. The rest of the contents of the box consisted of a complete file of the *Harijansevak* (a Hindi edition of the weekly *Harijan*), a change of clothes, and a book of hymns, and some hanks of self-spun yarn. " My heart's desire has been fulfilled ", he uttered in ecstasy, and gave the hundred-rupee note and yarn to Gandhiji. " What are you doing ? " Gandhiji asked him. " I remember having seen you somewhere before. Where have you come from ? "

" I have come from Madras. I am doing nothing at the present, and am happy just seeing you."

" But if you are doing nothing, how did you get the hundred rupees ? "

" Oh, Mahatmaji, it is mine. I also have some more."

" Then, why not give that, too ? "

At this, he immediately pulled out another hundred-rupee note and handed it over.

" You have not yet answered my question. Tell me, what was your profession."

" I was a Shroff (money-lender) but I am one no longer. I divided my property between my three sons, and am now free. Free to do your work. Keep me as your scavenger ; I want nothing more."

" So you divided all the property between your sons, and left no share for me ? " said Gandhiji laughing.

" Oh, no. Everything I have is yours. I had thought of bringing a thousand rupees for you. My son did give me a thousand rupees, but reluctantly, as he had lost some money in business this year, and would not cheerfully part with such a big amount. I, therefore, told him : " Take back half of it, and send it to me when I ask for it." And saying this, he took out the rest of the notes, to the value of Rs 500/-, and gave them to me.

" But how will you get back ? Keep something for your fare ", said Gandhiji laughing heartily.

" No. I can send a telegram for money ; I do not need any just at present. Take it all, Mahatmaji, for it is yours."

" What do you propose to do now ? "

" Nothing. Keep me as your humblest servant. If not, let me stay here a couple of days, and then I will go back to my home in Rajputana."

Gandhiji then gave instructions for putting him up, and gently said : " Mahadev, return all the notes to him. How can we take the whole amount ? Or, keep one and return the rest."

" Oh, no, Sir ", said the proud donor. " I will not take back again what I have once given. Mahatmaji, believe me, all is yours. I wanted so much to bring a thousand, but could not."

" If you can give me all I want, give me a crore."

" I will indeed, but I must send the Hundi to God, and if I were saint Narasimha Mehta, God might cash it."

" Well, well, I wish other Marwadis were like you. You are giving me all you have, whereas millionaires give me a paltry hundred, or a thousand."

" But, why not ", said Gandhiji in .childlike mirth, which he simply could not repress, " ask your sons also to give me something ? Why must they enjoy their wealth ? "

" They will give, you may be sure, as soon as I can convince them how worthy the cause is. However, it may take a little time. In the meanwhile, I still have kept some silver, which is yours. Nothing is mine. All my desires have been gratified now that I have seen you, spoken with you, and touched your feet."

His humility deeply impressed me, and fain would I have touched his feet in appreciation of it, but I had not the heart to hurt his godly humility. (*Harijan*, 8-2-'35, p. 419)

Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore had also arrived, and was staying with Lala Raghubir Singh at Kashmere Gate. He was collecting funds for his Institution of art, culture, and learning at Shantiniketan, and was going to present a play for this purpose. Bapuji did not like the idea of the

venerable Gurudev stooping to collect funds in this manner. So he sent Mahadevbhai to him forthwith and the required money was paid by a friend of his (Bapu's). Next, Gandhiji took all his companions to Gurudev and introduced them to him, including me. It was the first time that I saw the famous man at such close quarters.

After staying in Harijan Niwas for four weeks, Bapuji left Delhi for Wardha on January 28, 1935. For several years after that, he made it a practice of staying at the Harijan Ashram whenever he visited the Capital. He spent almost the whole of 1935 in Wardha, and devoted most of his time to Harijan work, dietetic experiments, Khadi work, and to the Village Industries Association.

Prior to leaving Delhi Gandhiji had invited me to accompany him to Wardha and assist him in his work there. Accordingly, I left Delhi for Wardha on the 28th of February. He had shifted to Maganwadi, where a garden with a big bungalow was dedicated to the memory of the late Maganlal Gandhi by Shri Jamnalal Bajaj. A museum of village arts' and crafts' products together with a central office for their distribution had been opened there. Maganwadi was humming with activity in those days, the main work being the revival of village industries. Bapuji took a keen interest in household affairs such as cooking, cleaning of utensils, grinding, and cultivating fruit and vegetables. He would use, as far as possible only village-made articles. He had given up his foreign-made fountain pen, and now used a reed pen to write with. I was entrusted with keeping the daily bazaar book. One day I bought a bitter Ghia, and that night he devoted considerable time in explaining the art of purchasing!

Though Bapuji liked me to stay with him at Maganwadi, my bad luck was such that I fell ill again with fever. He recalled my long illness of a year and a half before, and treated me. Though the fever lasted only three days this time he did not wish to take any risks as the water was rather heavy with mineral content and consequently constipating in effect, and I suffered from chronic constipation for years. He asked me to go back to

Delhi immediately, and I was obliged to return, after staying there only for a fortnight. Before leaving I wrote him a letter and put some of my difficulties before him.

It was my birthday. Bapu replied most affectionately :

" May God give you long life. May all your pious efforts achieve success.

" I found your living here doing you no good. I was unable to endure your illness. Go where your body can be healthy and live there. I consider that it would be best if you leave immediately. Ask what you have to enquire by correspondence."

He further continued,

" I certainly want to take place of a mother to you, but I do not find that inherent ability in me. A mother serves; she never expects service. I have always taken service from you. I don't remember ever having served you. A mother never commands; I have always commanded you. What more consolation can I give you now? You can certainly go on a tour of the South with your mother. I don't see any harm, if you go to Pondicherry, but I don't approve of Banaras, where there is no one to teach you Rajayoga. If you don't go to Pondicherry, you may go to Dehra Dun, Almora, or any such place. Do whatever service you choose in Delhi, which is the best place for you at present. Of course, anybody can serve the Village Industries Association without being a member. I have already spoken to you about the book.

" Nobody can have two helpers. There is only one helper, and He is God, the rest are mere names.

Wardha, 14, 15-3-'35 Bapu's Blessings "

I hesitated to publish this letter, as it was too personal, but I publish it in all humility now because it reveals the magnanimity of his heart, his compassion, and his benevolence. It shows that there was nothing too small for him to take an interest in, and that he would give the greatest thought to all matters regarding even an insignificant being like me. The touch-stone is said to convert — impartially — all ores into precious gold. So

also Gandhiji, whose aim it was to convert all kinds, classes, and strata of people to his point of view, in order that their co-ordinated effort might uplift the whole of India, economically and socially. He believed and asserted that, given equal opportunities, everybody was capable of attaining the same status which he enjoyed. He well knew the mental make-up of his people, and what caused it. He was aware that his countrymen were hopelessly enslaved by the greatest imperialistic power in the world, and they did not have sufficient guts to oppose it by themselves. He, therefore, set himself up as their leader, and used these same down-trodden people and soldiers of straw to oppose the all-powerful Britishers. That he was able to achieve so much was due partly to his magnetic power, and partly to his way of inspiring confidence both in the lowest of the low, and the highest of the high.

I returned home and left for Kashmere a few days later. In order to cope with the work which had collected, Gandhiji observed silence for four weeks; it came to an end on the morning of the 19th April. Speaking on the utility of silence he said :

"Silence is essential for one, whose life is an incessant search for truth. But such silence is a much more serious affair than the one I have been maintaining. In a truly serious search after truth, even writing as a means of communication, must stop. Then only would Truth speak, in every act, and written words would be unnecessary. There is still another merit in silence : I am prone to anger, like anyone else, but I can, successfully, suppress it during silence. This method of controlling anger is the best I have found. How is one to give vent to one's wrath if one is silent ? Not by one's eyes ; surely not by physical violence when one is pledged to non-violence ; neither by writing, for the wrath would disappear in the very process of writing."

Owing to continuous overstrain, Gandhiji suffered a nervous breakdown in December. His blood-pressure increased suddenly, and he was advised complete rest. All interviews, writings, and correspondence were stopped,

and Jamnalalji took it upon himself to observe a strict watch, lest he was disturbed by visitors eager to see him.

After ten weeks, Bapuji's blood-pressure slowly came down, and he was able gradually to resume his many activities. He attended the Gandhi Seva Sangh Conference at Savli in the first week of March, 1936. During one of his conversations, he explained what he meant by Gandhism and said :

" There is no such thing as Gandhism, and I do not want to leave any sect after me. I do not claim to have originated any new principle or doctrine. I have simply tried, in my own way, to apply the eternal truths to our daily life and problems. There is, therefore no question of my leaving any code like the Code of Manu. There cannot, possibly, be any comparison between that Law-giver and me. The opinions I have formed, and the conclusions I have arrived at, are not, by any means, final. I may change them tomorrow if I find better ones. I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both, on as vast a scale and as best as I could. In doing so, I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become, to me, a series of experiments in the practice of Truth and Non-violence. By instinct I have been truthful, but not necessarily non-violent. As a Jain Muni once rightly said, I was not so much a votary of Ahimsa, as I was of truth, and that I put the latter in the first place, and the former in the second. For, as he phrased it, I was capable of sacrificing non-violence for the sake of truth. In fact, it was in the course of my pursuit of truth that I discovered non-violence. Our Scriptures have declared that there is no Dharma (law) higher than truth. But non-violence, they say, is the highest duty. The word Dharma, in my opinion, has a different connotation as used in the two aphorisms.

" Well, my entire philosophy, if it may be called by that pretentious name, is contained in what I have just said. You will not call it Gandhism, for there is no " ism "

about it. And no elaborate literature or propaganda is needed to explain it. The Scriptures have been quoted against my postulation, but I have held faster than ever to my firm conviction that truth ought not to be sacrificed for anything whatsoever. Those who believe in the elementary truths I have laid down can propagate them *only* by living them. How am I to convince the world merely through books that my entire constructive programme is rooted in, and based on, the practice of non-violence ? Only my life can demonstrate it." (*Harijan*, 28-3-'36, p. 49)

After an absence of fourteen months, Bapu again came to Delhi on the 8th of March, 1936, and stayed at Harijan Niwas, where great changes had taken place during this period. Several buildings had been constructed and a training centre had been started. Gandhiji had not, as yet fully recovered from his recent illness, and had come here for a few days' rest. The Annual Session of the Indian National Congress — with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as President-elect — was to be held the following month at Lucknow. The preliminary meeting of the Working Committee was held in Delhi ; it lasted one full week.

Bapuji got up at 4 o'clock in the morning. At 4-20 prayers were held, and after prayers, he again slept till 7 a.m. when he breakfasted and then went for a walk. Verses from the Tulsidas Ramayana were recited to the accompaniment of music, between 8 and 9 o'clock. He took his bath at 11 and then rested. He lunched late — at 3 o'clock — after which he would spin for a while. At 6 p.m. he took his evening walk ; held prayers at 7, and retired for the night at 9 p.m. Interviews were sandwitched in, wherever possible, throughout the day. Bapuji remained in Delhi till the 27th of March, when he left for Lucknow to attend the Congress Session. I preceded him by a day in order to make the necessary arrangements for his stay there.

While in Delhi, Bapuji, and his youngest son, Devadas, stayed at the Harijan Colony. One day, a husband and wife

were found sitting, since morning, with the vow that unless they obtained Gandhiji's Darshan, they would abstain from meals. Evening had come, and they were still patiently sitting, without either food or water. Though I was responsible for the management of Bapu's affairs, I was unaware of this, till he called me and asked me to bring the pair up. Hearing the story I realized how considerate Bapu was to his devotees.

## VII

## THE LUCKNOW CONGRESS AND AFTER

Bapuji reached Lucknow on the morning of the 28th of March, 1936. He performed the opening ceremony of the first Village Industries Exhibition the same day — the biggest exhibition of the year. A huge amount of money had been spent in organizing and getting it up, and in order that it should not run at a loss, Bapuji daily attended it. He asked everybody to visit the Exhibition not once but as many times as possible, and pay four annas for the privilege. To further increase the income, and attract large crowds, he delivered another speech on the 12th of April at the Exhibition grounds and said, "Let me again stress that our pride is meaningless if we cannot appreciate things made in India, especially the hand-made products of cottage industries, and continue to hanker after foreign goods. It is idle for those, whose heart is not stirred at the sight of these goods made by our poor, but highly skilled, craftsmen, and who cannot make a little sacrifice in order that they should benefit, to talk of Independence for India." He would anxiously await to hear the amount which had been received daily as gate-money.

He stayed in Lucknow till the 20th of April. While there, he, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, and nearly fifty others were all accommodated in a bungalow on University Road. Lucknow is notorious for its heat during the summer months. It was April at this time, and owing to the oppressive

heat, everybody felt miserable and cross, and to add to this, no proper arrangements had been made; everybody was a leader, and nobody was a follower, thus making for disorder and chaos. The city was four miles away from the place, where the party had been housed, and nothing was easily available. The people in charge of the arrangements would come and make promises to supply whatever was needed, but nothing would arrive, thus fraying tempers still further. Everybody was heartily sick of prevailing conditions there, but Bapu was used to all kinds of difficulties, and never complained of the discomfort, thus setting an example for others to follow. During the National Week, he fasted on both the 6th and 13th for full 24 hours on each of those days. From Lucknow he went to Allahabad to attend the Working Committee meeting. When the session was over he proceeded to Wardha, and I returned to Delhi.

Gandhiji had been long planning to settle in a village and engage himself in the uplift of rural folk. He had discussed the matter with his colleagues and was now awaiting a suitable opportunity to put his decision into practice. At last, on the morning of April 30, 1936 he walked to Segaon — about five miles from Maganwadi — covering the bulk of the distance on foot. His hut was not yet ready; so a place in which to sit and work had been temporarily rigged up out of split bamboo and mattings which served as roof and wicker work walls, fastened to a tree, which protected him from the sun. A beautiful well nearby with crystal clear water made the place slightly cooler than its warm surroundings.

Gandhiji began to live there by himself. In the beginning, he did not take any of his companions from Maganwadi to keep him company — not even Ba, Mahadevbhai or Pyarelal. But Mahadevbhai went there, almost daily to acquaint him with the progress of that day's work, and take orders for the next day. He also attended to Bapu's needs. Some of the incidents which took place during the first days at the village, as narrated by him, I herewith reproduce from the *Harijan*. They show the difficulties he faced in bringing around the village people to

his ideas. He was fond of quoting "Yatha Pinde, Tatha Brahmande", or, "As the atom, so the universe", meaning thereby that if he could only convert one village to his ideal, the seven lakhs of Indian villages would then follow the same pattern. And in selecting Segaon for his abode and place of work, he had chosen the hardest nut of all to crack. I had seen with my own eyes, that while people elsewhere were eager for his Darshan he could pass through the bazaars of Wardha and people would not even care to look at him. They would not get up to pay their respects to him. Therein lay his statesmanship, in wanting to convert those first, who were the most disinterested and lethargic in regard to his activities.

This is what Mahadevbhai wrote :

During the brief hour or so of my daily, morning business visit to Segaon, it was hardly possible to obtain more than a fleeting glimpse or two of the life there. I must, therefore, ask the reader to content himself with just brief pen sketches of what I saw, leaving Gandhiji some day to fill in the gaps, and give us an inside view of conditions as he found them.

Among the patients who came to Bapu for treatment were a woman and her daughter. He enquired as to the nature of their ailments ; then gave them a powder or two — of, I think, soda bicarb — with detailed instructions about the diet, to be followed. Then the following conversation took place :

"You can see that I am being compelled to grow a beard."

"My husband is a barber and is ready to come whenever you summon him", said the woman.

"That I know, but will he shave my Harijan friends as well ?"

"I don't know about that, Maharaj ; but he is quite prepared to shave *you*."

"How can I accept his service when my Harijan brothers cannot have it ?"

To this logical question of Bapu's, there was no reply. Mother and daughter smiled, went home, and conveyed the message to the barber, who, in the beginning of Gandhiji's stay in the village, used to be seen every other morning shaving all those requiring it.

* * *

The next visitor was a respectable-looking old man with a heavy white moustache. I remember him as the man who, three months before, when Gandhiji had broached the idea of settling down in the village to him, had made it clear that on the ticklish question of untouchability Gandhiji could not have his co-operation.

" So, Patil, must I still remain without the service of the local barber ? "

" By no means, Mahatmaji, for he is ready. Shall I send him to you ? "

" I know you can send for him and command him to obey you, but what about my Harijan son ? You must be aware that I have a family here, and that Govind is my son. How can I have the barber's service, if he will not allow Govind to go near him ? What would you do if you were in my place ? Tell me. Supposing you were invited to a place from where your son was deliberately excluded. Would you go there ? "

" Now there, Bapuji, you touch him on the raw ", said Jamnalalji, who had known the old Patil for years. " If someone could positively assure him that he would go straight to Swarga (Heaven), if he cast off the curse of untouchability, he would do so. But he wants reliable assurance, and he is not ready to accept ours." The room resounded with laughter at this witticism in which the old Patil heartily joined, though it was at his expense. " Everything is permissible to a Mahatma like you, but not to ordinary folk like us ", he said, and then stalked off.

* * *

" Radhakrishna, I want a number of carpenter's tools. Can you get them for me ? "

"Oh, yes. You want them for the carpenters here I suppose."

"No. For myself. They do not know how to make even a simple thing properly. I must give them an occasional lesson. Now take down a list of the things I need." Radhakrishna did so: An adze, plane, gimlet, hammer, saw, and an axe were the articles he wanted.

"You cannot, perhaps, get a gimlet made here. But the rest, I suppose, you can get here, or at least such as have been made in India."

Radhakrishna was flabbergasted. "You want all these to be Swadeshi", he exclaimed in surprise. "Impossible to get them here."

Gandhiji then promptly replied, " Tear up the list. I do not want them. Mahadev, inquire at all possible places whether we can obtain any of these articles of Indian-make? If not, see if we can have them made."

* * *

The Sadhu or Bawa, who was for the time being a member of the family, was visited by a number of devotees, who were surprised that the Sadhu not only associated with the Mahatma but also ate food cooked by a Harijan boy. In practice, the Sadhu did not believe in untouchability, though he had not succeeded in removing the prejudice from the minds of his followers. They came and argued with him, but he was frequently unable to solve their doubts and difficulties, and they then turned to Gandhiji to be convinced.

"But", said a devotee of his, "Even the lower creation observes untouchability, Mahatmaji, and you would have man shed it."

"Now, that's something novel. Explain your theory, so that I may understand." "Normally, donkeys don't associate with dogs, and a crow does not touch a pigeon's eggs. Every species has its own sphere, its own place, its own use in God's creation."

"But cows, donkeys and dogs will gladly remain under the same roof if you feed them and look after them. And do you hold that there is the same difference between

you and an 'untouchable', as there is between a cow and a dog ?"

They were puzzled, but they ventured forth still further in the region of analogy :

"Don't we shun wild animals ?"

"Do you shun lions, tigers and snakes, because they are untouchable ? Absurd ; you shun them because you fear them. You would fain tame them if you could, and crowds would flock around attributing miraculous powers to the one who could domesticate these wild beasts."

"But we don't touch pigs because they are dirty, and not because we are afraid of them."

"Well, then supposing a man in cleaner clothes looked upon you as dirty and regarded you as an untouchable, would you mind ? And what of your women-folk who do all the dirty jobs for your children ? They are still the mistresses of the family. Why so ?"

As they were getting a bit mixed up in their reasoning, Gandhiji tried to accommodate them a little. Now, let us suppose that the so-called untouchables were as well-dressed as yourself, and washed themselves clean after doing the dirty jobs for you, and for which you should thank them rather than despise or shun them ; would you then touch them ? Supposing they ate clean food and did not touch beef or carrion, would you touch them ? I tell you that there are numerous so-called Harijans, in India, who satisfy all these conditions, who live cleaner and purer lives than we do, and yet we regard them as untouchables. How will God forgive this heinous sin of ours ?"

"But you want us to admit them into the temples too, so that they may worship side by side with Brahmans. How can people doing dirty jobs be admitted to the temples ?"

"Have I ever asked them to go and worship with baskets of filth on their heads ? Have I not said that they would satisfy all the conditions about bathing and cleanliness that the other Hindus satisfy ? According to your faulty argument all surgeons and nurses become unfit to enter our temples, for they constantly, deal with diseases and rotting flesh, in their effort to cure sick people."

The discourse went on for a long time, with what result I cannot say ; I have only tried to show the trend it took.

The poor barber whom I have mentioned earlier in this chapter had, by now, become, quite famous in the neighbourhood, for, those not believing in untouchability, tried to ascertain from him why he hesitated to serve Bapu, or for the matter of that, himself since he would thus supplement his meagre earnings. It is not that Gandhiji really needed his service ; rather, would he have preferred to avoid having anything to do with him for reasons mostly hygienic. However, the man's extreme poverty pulled at Bapu's heart-strings and he, therefore, wanted to put 15 annas more each month into his pocket. But much as the barber valued the extra 15 annas, he was afraid of losing caste with his fellow-men. One of the chief reasons he gave for observing the rules of untouchability was that the old village Patil would be the first to boycott him if he shaved Govind, the Harijan boy. But the Patil (or Village Headman) surprised everybody when he went one evening to Gandhiji and said, " Maharaj, I hereby declare in everybody's presence that I am now ready to be served by the same barber who shaves Govind, whom you regard as your son. To prove this, I am quite prepared to sit down and have a shave immediately after he has attended to Govind."

" What then is the difficulty ? "

" By making this statement in public I have put him at ease, for he was afraid that I would be the first to boycott him if he shaved Govind. But he also asked of me a thing I cannot do."

" What is that ? ", enquired the curious Mahatma.

" It is that I should at least once have food at his place. With God as witness, Maharaj, I say that I have never in my life of nearly four-score years had tea, or any other kind of refreshment in a hotel. How then does he expect me to go and eat at his place ? I was the first in the village, when you came, to warn you that whatever others might say, I should not be able to share your views on untouchability. But today, whilst others are fighting shy, I have overcome my prejudice to the extent of declaring that I should no

longer regard him as untouchable even after he has shaved a so-called untouchable."

"I must congratulate you on your change of heart, and I quite appreciate what you say", said Gandhiji laughing. "But why does he insist on your eating at his place?"

"Because he thinks his castemen might boycott him, and he wants to make assurance doubly sure by having me in his place to eat, since I command a certain amount of respect here. Now, Maharaj, is this kind of thing also a part of your anti-untouchability programme?"

"Certainly not. I am satisfied if you have conquered the prejudice of touch. Inter-dining is no part of my anti-untouchability programme, though, as you know, I have Govind to cook for me. But that is what I would expect every worker for the Harijan cause to do, but not, necessarily, you."

Untouchability, as such, the old man had obviously shed, and that in itself was no small gain. Ordinarily, he would have shunned a house where an 'untouchable' boy was employed as a cook; but he not only visited the house daily, but was on the best of terms with Govind. This made Bapu very happy, as did also the fact that the village barber now came to the colony to shave everyone, irrespective of caste or creed. A good illustration, this, of how the quietness, charm, and persistence of Gandhiji won people over to his point of view, as violent and autocratic methods would not have done.

When I went to Segaon one morning I found Gandhiji busily pulling to pieces a hair-cropping machine, in order to clean and oil it. That done he began to crop his hair himself with a mirror set in front of him to aid him in this rather difficult task.

Just then one of the Sadhu's devotees came in, and, as luck would have it, he happened to be a barber. "Bapuji", shouted the pleased Sadhu, from the opposite corner, "let Bhima cut your hair; he knows the art."

"But how does he come to know it?"

"He is a barber by profession."

"Ah, that is very good, come along then." But as soon as Bhima began the operation, Gandhiji questioned him in the following manner: "I hope you have no prejudice against shaving our Harijan brethren ; have you ?"

He hesitated slightly, then replied, "Inwardly, I have no prejudice against Harijans."

"That I can believe. But will you shave a Harijan on the same terms as you shave me ?"

Again he hesitated. Thereupon Gandhiji turned to the Sadhu and said, "I thought you had first ascertained this man's ideas on the subject of untouchability, as you know very well what mine are, before asking me to accept his service."

"I am sorry", answered the Sadhu, who felt somewhat abashed. "That particular aspect of the problem had, for the moment, escaped me."

"Then", continued Bapu, "I shall have to consider whether I should stop, right now, in the middle of the operation, and dispense with Bhima, as it goes against my principles to accept his services under the circumstances."

But Bhima said, "Oh, no ; certainly not, Maharaj. Though I myself do not believe in untouchability, as I have just told you ; yet, because society is what it is, I conform outwardly to its age-old laws, and do not shave Harijans. But I solemnly promise that from now on I shall serve Harijans on the same terms as yourself."

Gandhiji was agreeably surprised. Bhima finished the job neatly, and then explained that he had been in jail during the Nagpur National Flag Satyagraha and that, while in jail, he used to shave everyone without prejudice. But once outside, he had again yielded to the pressure of popular prejudice, but that he would no longer do so. (*Harijan*, 15-8-'36, p. 209-10)

In October, 1936 Bapu went to Banaras to perform the opening ceremony of the Bharat Mata temple built by Shri Shivaprasad Gupta, a veteran Congressman. My mother was ailing in those days. Getting news that he was going there, I thought to myself how nice it would be if he could come down to Delhi, which was fairly near Banaras,

and see my mother. I wrote to him a letter at once saying: "If you could kindly break journey here, while on your way back to Wardha, I would be extremely grateful. My mother is ailing, and would like very much to see you." I got his reply by return post assenting to my request, greatly to my relief and satisfaction. He arrived at Delhi on October 27th, and when he got off the train he said, "I have no other business here other than to see your dear mother and Begum Ansari." So he drove straight to my residence, and went upto the first floor where my mother was lying. After spending a few minutes with her he left to see Begum Ansari at Dr. Joshi's hospital in Karol Bagh. Bapu caught the train for Wardha the very same day. This was his very last visit to my house, as I lost my mother in 1938; and with her passing my so-called home, where I could bring him now and then, was also broken up.

The same year, i.e. in December, 1936 he went to Faizpur for the Congress Session, which was being held there. This was the first meeting of the Congress to be held in a village instead of in a city, and Pandit Jawaharlal was the President-elect. An All India Village Industries Exhibition was also held, where articles made in villages were exhibited. On this occasion I stayed with a friend, but spent the whole day with Bapu. Such large crowds came to attend this session and see the Exhibition that Gandhiji had to end the former, and close the latter the very next day, because all the available edibles had been consumed, and there was the fear of an epidemic breaking out, owing to the accumulation of filth, and rubbish caused by the influx of vast crowds in this small place.

One day, a student came to Gandhiji and asked for a message. Gandhiji said, "What new message can I give you at the age of 68, and what is the use of my giving you any message, if you pass a resolution to assassinate me or burn my effigy? Killing the physical body, of course, does not matter, for out of my ashes a thousand Gandhis may arise. But what if you assassinate or bury the principles I have lived for? And this is what is being done today." (*Harijan*, 16-1-'37, p. 387)

But for his occasional tours to Savli for the Gandhi Seva Sangh Conference, to Lucknow for the Congress Session, to Banaras, Rajkot, Ahmedabad, to the Nandi Hills for his health, and to the Faizpur Congress, Gandhiji spent most of 1936 in Segaon and devoted himself to rural reconstruction work. He went to Travancore, on his historic Temple-Entry mission in the early part of January, 1937.

Later in the year, during March, 1937, an All India Convention was held at Delhi, and Bapu attended it. While there, he stayed at Harijan Niwas from the 15th to the 22nd of March. After that he left for Wardha. He used to walk, for quite long distances, barefooted during his morning and evening walks, regardless of the fact that many of the roads were covered with loose pebbles. It was only later that he took to wearing Chappals.

Though Gandhiji was a great and saintly man, nevertheless he too suffered from various physical ailments, both major and minor, from time to time like all the rest of us human beings. One day Bapu had a toothache. He was going to a dentist to have it pulled out. I was to accompany him, but a gentleman who had come to see him, rather unexpectedly and quite unconcernedly, took my seat in the car, leaving me behind. As the car started, I asked the gentleman to kindly bring the extracted tooth and give it to me as a keepsake. Though he did bring back the tooth, he gave it to Bapuji instead of to me. How could I ask Bapu for it ? I did not muster up sufficient courage to ask for it, so the tooth was put away in his desk. I kept my eye constantly upon it. When Bapu was to leave Delhi, I packed all his luggage, but carefully left the tooth behind in the desk, intentionally. When he had left I gleefully put it into my pocket. But the tooth was not to remain in my pocket for having obtained it in this underhand method. My conscience began to cry : "Thief, thief", and I felt both uncomfortable and unhappy. Had I not taken it without informing Bapu ? At last, I wrote to him confessing everything, and sent the tooth alongwith the letter. Thus, the

sought-after little tooth did not remain either with the gentleman who got it from the dentist or with me.

In May, Gandhiji attended the Hudli Session of the Gandhi Seva Sangh, and in July, the Congress took office in some of the provinces. In October, 1937 he put forward his scheme of Basic Education.

Bapu went to Delhi on the 4th of August, 1937 to see Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, and took a train back to Wardha the same evening. While in Delhi, he stayed at Harijan Niwas. On his way to the station, the car he was in came to a halt, due to a puncture in one of the tyres. A European gentleman — a stranger — was in the car behind his. Seeing Bapu standing on the road he offered a lift in his car. Gandhiji gratefully accepted his offer and reached the station in time. Since then wherever he went, a spare car followed him, to be used in case of accident or emergency. The Mahatma spent most of 1937 in Segaon, though he travelled a good deal attending this conference or that meeting, as was required of him. He was now keeping indifferent health. In November, his blood pressure again went up, and he was advised complete rest, so he went to Juhu, for a month in December, and returned to Segaon on the 8th of January, 1938.

The Haripura Congress was held in February of this year. I had also gone there to attend it and stayed with Bapuji, who was still suffering from blood pressure. This Congress Session was unique in many ways, especially for excellent arrangements and organization, despite the fact of its being held in a rural area with poor facilities. A rural Congress has never been held again. Subhash Babu was the President of the Congress. He was taken out in a procession in a cart drawn by bullocks. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had spared no pains to make this session a success. Though several lakhs of people had congregated, still, the management and cleanliness were admirable. Thousands of visitors were dining in the Congress mess, but no scarcity was ever felt. Everything used was of village craft and industry. Only hand-ground flour and hand-pounded rice, cow's milk

and ghee were served. This session was a good example of the business ability of Gujaratis.

On the conclusion of the session, on February the 22nd, I accompanied Bapuji to Wardha. This was my first visit to Sevagram. I sought his permission to stay there and help him, but he advised me to make Delhi my work centre, the main reason being that he was solicitous for my health, as the Wardha climate did not suit me. He said that I could still be a part of him even though I was living away from him. If I had no chance of staying with him, why need I bother ? " No well-doer meets with a sad end, is said in the Gita ", he added. Anyway, I left the place, with his blessings, on the 26th of February, 1938 for Delhi.

In March, 1938 a meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangh was held at Delang, in District Puri, Orissa. Bapuji went there, and I obtained his permission to join him there. It was incumbent on everyone, who had come to attend the session, to do a certain amount of manual labour daily. There was a big pond, close to the hut in which Bapu was accommodated, and everybody had to dig it, drain it, and make it fit for use, as it was in a bad state of repair and also filthy, thus endangering the lives of the villagers who might use it. All the eatables were village-produced. A small exhibition of Orissa arts and crafts was organized for the benefit of the visitors. Inspite of being a sick man, for now Bapu's blood-pressure was very high indeed, he still managed to spend an hour daily at the session, when he made a short speech and answered questions. He stayed at Delang till the 31st of March, and then went to Calcutta, while I left for Hardwar to see the famous and colourful Kumbha Mela.

An incident which took place at Delang is worth mentioning here. The Jagannath temple was not very far away. Bapuji asked everybody to go to Puri and see the noted temple, as it would be a pity to miss it. Pujya Ba, Manilal Gandhi and Kanu Gandhi as well as Mahadevbhai's wife, Durgabahen, Lakshmidasbhai's wife and I went to see

the sacred town. It was a rule of Bapu's that he would not enter any temple where Harijans were not allowed to worship. In one of his speeches he said : "If the temple of the Lord of the world is not open to Harijans, and so long as it remains so, the Lord is not, in my opinion the Lord of the world, but only the Lord of those who feed and feast under His shelter." The Puri temple was closed to the Harijans and so Manilalbhai, Kanu and I refused to enter it. Ba, being of simple mind and strong faith, entered it with Durgabahen and others to obtain Darshan. Upon our return, Bapu asked us all what we had seen there. When Ba told him that she had entered the temple Gandhiji was greatly perturbed and his blood-pressure shot up again much to everybody's anxiety. Ba asked me, why I had not dissuaded her from entering the temple, since I well knew Bapu's views on this subject ? Hearing this, I was disturbed myself, but Bapu came to my rescue and said that preventing Ba was no part of my business. After this incident I also vowed not to enter any temple where Harijans were not admitted. I had observed several times that what was within my mind but which I could not properly express in words was somehow expressed by Bapu, thus saving me, very frequently, from embarrassment. Owing to my shyness I always avoided talking personally with him. If I had to say anything I wrote it on a piece of paper and handed it to him, and he understood what I felt and what I tried to express in the written word. To my constant surprise, and occasional chagrin, he often read my inner thoughts without my saying anything, thus he seemed to know me better than I knew myself.

Gandhiji made a tour of N. W. F. Province, for the first time, in May 1938, and from there he proceeded to Juhu for a change and much-needed rest. On the 22nd of July, 1938 I was sentenced to a fortnight's imprisonment for picketing. Upon being released I immediately proceeded to Simla on some important work. While there, I received news of my dear mother's death on August 26th, due to the shock of my being jailed again. To console me Bapuji wrote a letter from Sevagram, in which he said,

"My thoughts are always with you. It is indeed regrettable that you were not near your mother, when she died. But we should never consider death as final, for it is but a great change from one kind of life to another. The physical body is ever-changing, so why should not the soul which inhabits it change its abode to another? Therefore, there is no need to mourn the passing of loved ones, though, of course, we miss them and yearn for their presence. If you desire to come here, you may do so. But as I am going to Delhi in a few days' time you should stay there, if you wish to save unnecessary expenditure. Besides, as you know, the Wardha climate too does not agree with you.

Sevagram, 3-9-'38 Bapu Blessings"

According to plan, Bapuji came to Delhi on the 20th of September and stayed at Harijan Niwas. I had obtained his permission to erect a memorial in memory of my mother, at Harijan Niwas. He laid the foundation stone for it on the 25th of September. As he was observing silence then, he wrote a short speech for the occasion, which was as follows:

"I am sorry that I am unable to speak on this memorable occasion. In perpetuating the memory of their relatives, rich people often spend vast sums of money in a way which has neither any utility to the general public, nor any religious benefit to themselves, and hence is a sheer waste of money. Neither is there any Dharma in it. Therefore, I especially appreciate being present at this opening ceremony, for Janaki Devi (my mother) was Punya Atma. Her death took place a few days ago. Her family is both, large in size and well known. All the brothers wisely decided that in perpetuating her sacred memory something for the Harijan cause should be done. They decided with the consent of the Sangh authorities to build a Prayer Hall on this site. This will be of far greater value than a mere monument. I have been entrusted with the auspicious work of laying its foundation stone. I am doing

it in the presence of all of you and hope that the students of the Sangh will be benefited by having the temple for worship, that others also will follow this good example of serving the Harijans on the demise of their dear ones."

Bapu stayed at Harijan Niwas from the 20th of September to the 3rd of October. During these days, the Congress Working Committee meetings, and the All India Congress Committee meetings were held. A Conference of Provincial Ministers was also held there during this period. A National Planning Committee was set up. As in Europe, preparations were being made for the coming war, the question before the Congress Working Committee was the attitude the Congress should take if such a war actually broke out. Fortunately, before any decision was arrived at, war was averted by the Munich Pact. Commenting on the pact, Gandhiji wrote: "The peace of Europe gained at Munich is a triumph of violence. It is also its defeat. I suggest that if it is brave, as it is, to die to a man fighting against odds, it is braver still to refuse to fight and yet to refuse to yield to the usurper."

Bapuji had to some extent regained his health, and was keeping fairly fit at this time. The Delhi climate had always suited him. His blood-pressure was now normal. In the mornings, he took exercise by walking back and forth in the verandah of the place where he was staying, and in the evening he would go by car upto the platform where the King Emperor's Durbar was held in 1911, and returned on foot. Large crowds assembled at prayer time. A few of the Working Committee members were also staying at Harijan Niwas. These included Subhas Chandra Babu, Rajendra Prasad, Khan Saheb Abdul Gaffar Khan, Jamnalal Bajaj, Harikrishna Mehtab, Shankarrao Deo, Rajaji and Vishwanathdas. Bapuji had a very busy time even though he observed strict silence.

The secret and usefulness of silence was known and appreciated by Gandhiji. Once he said that if a perfect state was ever reached by mankind, one human being could

bring about change in others by mere silent transference of thought and would not need to utter a word, much less make a speech. People from far and near gathered in large numbers during his prayers. One day a blind man emerged from the crowd to reach him and obtain Darshan. Volunteers wanted to stop him but Bapuji would not permit them to do so. He told them to leave the blind man alone and himself came forward and embraced the blind man.

## VIII

## THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE TOUR AND THEREAFTER

Bapuji left Delhi for the turbulent Frontier Province on the 4th of October, 1938, accompanied by a few of his companions — Dr. Sushila Nayyar, Pyarelalji and myself. Ba and Mahadevbhai could not accompany him on this trip.

Bapu stayed at Peshawar from 6th to 8th October. On the 9th, he proceeded to Utmanzai, the home village of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. He was still observing his daily silence, but relaxed his vow during his conversations with the Khudai Khidmatgars, in order that they might better understand him and the principles he believed in, for they were a somewhat primitive rural group who could be better reached by actual words rather than by written matter. It so happened that, to protect Bapu's life from any untoward incident among the tribesmen, the Khudai Khidmatgars were posted, with loaded guns, one night, on the roof of Bapu's residence. Before posting them, Khan Saheb had a talk with Bapuji, but did not fully divulge his plans. He just asked if Bapuji objected, in principle, to policing. Bapu silently nodded to convey that he did not mind without knowing what was really intended. In the morning, he heard the truth, and was deeply pained. He at once sent for Khan Saheb, and asked him how his followers, who were supposedly pledged to non-violence,

could watch him thus armed with guns. Khan Saheb was a bit nonplussed, and said that it was due to some misunderstanding. Thereafter though the watch was continued no weapon was ever held by his followers during the remainder of the tour. The chief object of his visit was to inculcate the true spirit of non-violence amongst the tribesmen, who were violent and revengeful by nature. The talks he held with the Khudai Khidmatgars were mainly on this subject, and although the language barrier was there owing to the fact that they were Pushtu-speaking people, they did manage to grasp the true meaning of Bapu's teachings through Khan Saheb's interpretation in Pushtu.

He began his tour on the 16th. On its completion he returned to Peshawar which served as headquarters, and from there visited Nawshera, Mardan, Sawabi along the route and reached Kohat which was Afridi territory, on the 21st. Everyone here carried a gun, including children. He proceeded from there to Hengo, and again returned to Kohat in order to proceed to Bannu. From there he left for Lakimaghat, and reached Dera Ismail Khan on the 29th. From Dehra he returned once again to Peshawar on the 2nd November, and stayed there for four days. He started for Abbottabad, and from there went on to Texila on the 9th. This ended his tour, and he left for Wardha the same day. I stayed behind. On my return journey, I halted at Wazirabad to see a friend of mine.

This frontier tour was a historical one in many ways, especially in that Bapu taught the gospel of non-violence to those hot-blooded and vengeful tribal people. Bapuji had the greatest affection and love for the Khan Brothers, who, on their part, considered him their guide and philosopher. Wherever Gandhiji went, he was received with the deepest affection and love by the simple tribesmen and their chiefs. They listened to Bapu expound his views on various topics with rapt attention. Non-violence was something new to them, as from very childhood they were taught to handle arms. Family feuds, which persisted from generation to

generation had ruined them financially and life had no value for them. The thing which counted most was one's family honour and tradition. Khan Saheb realized the danger of extinction to this race, if the same feuds persisted any longer, and the spirit of revenge still prevailed. He studied Gandhiji's philosophy of non-violence, and therein he found a solution of all the ills which troubled his people. He studied and assimilated it, and then started his Khudai Khidmatgar movement to liberate the Frontier folk from the British yoke, as well as to bring about a social revolution amongst his people, and to change their violent nature. This was why he invited Gandhiji to his province, and also took him to No-Man's Land. This tour helped to bring the Khan Brothers into closer contact with Bapuji, and they are suffering at the Government's hands to this day on that very account. As a full narrative of that epic tour is given by Pyarelalji in his book, *Pilgrimage for Peace*, I am not giving details of that tour.

While at Utmanzai, Bapuji wanted me to start Khadi work there, and, in this connection, wrote a note to me, on 20-10-'38, as follows:

"I don't find time enough to have a talk with you, but my warning of today is beneficial for you, for me, and for the country. You get such independence as you deserve. Your wealth is in neither silver, gold, nor keen intellect, but is in your boundless love for humanity. I cannot find a better method whereby you can serve your countrymen than this. If you are so inclined you can accept my suggestion and I shall heartily endorse your decision."

But as misfortune would have it, I could not avail myself of this opportunity, so graciously offered by Bapuji, as I was otherwise engaged and when I explained my inability to do as he suggested and asked him for advice, he wrote:

"I understand from your letter that for the present you will have to stay in Delhi, as the various jobs you have written about are duties to which you have got to attend.

is more fragile even than a bangle. The bangle can at least be kept by the art of preservation for a thousand years or more, whereas the human body disintegrates daily, and in degrees, till final disintegration sets in after the usual span of life." (*Harijan*, 11-2-'39, p. 1)

In May, the All India Congress Committee Session was held at Calcutta, and Shri Subhash Babu resigned from the Presidentship, and Shri Rajendra Prasad was elected in his place.

Gandhiji went from Rajkot to Brindaban, Bihar, to attend the Gandhi Seva Sangh Conference on May 7th, and in July he visited the N. W. F. P. for the third time, and toured the Hazara District for three weeks. On his way back, he stayed in Delhi for a day and attended the first Convocation at the Harijan Colony on the 27th of July, when 21 students received their certificates from his hands.

From Abbottabad he addressed the following letter to Herr Hitler:

"It is quite clear that you are, today, the one person in the whole world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to the savage state. Must you pay that price for an object, however worthy it may appear to be to you? Will you listen to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success?"

In August 1939, I toured South India and then met Bapuji in Sevagram on the 10th. The Congress Working Committee meetings were being held there at that time, when the dark clouds of war were hanging over the world. Important questions concerning the country were also considered. When I was in Ceylon, the Second World War was declared on the 3rd September, and Bapuji had to go to Simla, via Delhi, on the 4th and then on the 25th of September, as well as on the 5th October, to see the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, to discuss the Congress attitude towards war. Thinking that Bapu would start the movement soon, I cut short my visit to the lovely Isle of Ceylon,

and met Gandhiji on the train while he was returning from Delhi.

He visited Delhi again on the first of November, 1939 and stayed at Birla House. He performed the opening ceremony of the Prarthana Mandir, or Prayer Hall, built in memory .of my mother, at Harijan Niwas on the 2nd of November. If you remember, he laid its foundation stone on the 25th of September, 1938. Speaking on this occasion he said :

" The opening ceremony of this Hall in which to pray and meditate is being performed by me with the wish that our religious instinct may develop through the constant use of it. We shall greatly benefit if we devote as much time as possible to prayer and be so guided by it that in the end our lives become an earthly manifestation of true spiritual grace and sanctity. Therefore, if this temple proves to be a means for developing the prayer instinct, the devotion of the brothers who have built it will have borne fruit. Let us all pray that God will give peace to the soul of Chandiwalas' departed mother."

On the 5th of February, 1940 he once again met the Viceroy in Delhi, and said, " I see no prospect of a peaceful and honourable settlement of the question of India's participation in this War."

The Gandhi Seva Sangh Session was held at Malikanda in East Bengal towards the middle of February. Bapuji planned to go there after first visiting Shantiniketan. I joined him, and we visited the place on the 17th of February. The affectionate meeting between Gurudev and Gandhiji was a lesson in love and mutual respect, existing between the two great men. It was free of rivalry, distrust or envy. A welcome, according to ancient Hindu traditions, was given to Bapu in the Mango grove. After spending two days there, he reached Calcutta on the 20th. Subhas Babu had just résigned from the Congress and hence there was dissatisfaction and unrest amongst the Bengalis. All along the route, from Shantiniketan to Calcutta, and from there to Malikanda, Bapu was greeted with shouts of " We don't

want Gandhi", "Down with Gandhism", "We don't want an *ad hoc* Committee" etc.

Though sad in heart, he reached Malikanda on the 21st of February. The town is situated on one of the banks of the Padma river in the Dacca District. This area — the birthplace of Shri P. C. Ghosh — is inhabited mostly by Muslims. Here, all the eatables were of both local produce and make. A small exhibition of village crafts was also held here, and the same slogans were again repeated, day and night. Once, an attempt was made to set fire to the exhibition. When Sardar Patel was on his way to attend a meeting of the session a shoe was hurled at him, but he escaped unhurt. Here it was that, in view of the prevailing conditions, Gandhiji advised winding up the Sangh. Referring to the slogans he remarked :

"Let Gandhism be destroyed, by all means, if it stands for error. Truth and Ahimsa, however, can never be destroyed, but if Gandhism is another name for sectarianism it deserves to be destroyed. If I were somehow to know, after my death, that what I have always believed in and stood for had degenerated into sectarianism, I would be deeply pained. We have to work silently and independently towards the achievement of our ideals, but let no one say that he is a follower of Gandhi. It is enough for me that I should be my own follower. I know what an inadequate follower I am of myself, for I often cannot live up to the convictions I hold. You are no followers, but are fellow students, fellow pilgrims, fellow seekers, and fellow workers.

"Once you have realized the truth of this statement, you will see that we must eschew Power Politics. By this I mean the holding of responsible positions in the Congress, Municipal, and other local bodies, because of the prestige and salaries they carry.

"When we have achieved this, then only can our Sangh become useful as a sort of post-graduate school, or research organization.

"We have to make truth and non-violence not only a pattern of behaviour for individual practice, but also for

practice by groups, communities, and even entire nations. That, at any rate, is my dream! I shall live and die in trying to realize it. My faith helps me to discover new truths everyday. Ahimsa is the attribute of the soul and therefore to be practised by everybody in all the affairs of life. If it cannot be practised in all the departments, it has no practical value." (*Harijan*, 2-3-'40, p. 23)

The Annual Session of the Indian National Congress, with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as its President-elect, was to be held in March, 1940 at Ramgarh in Bihar. It was the most momentous session in Congress history, as India was forced to join the War without first ascertaining the opinion of her people, and the Congress opposed this action of the British Government. It wanted to know the aims for which this Second World War was being fought, and what would be India's position afterwards. The British Government would not, or could not answer these questions, so all Congress Ministries resigned in protest on the 8th of November. The Working Committee, at its Wardha sitting in December, had also asked the country to be prepared for a fight. The atmosphere was tense, and everybody once again looked to Gandhiji for a lead in this national crisis.

From Malikanda, Bapuji went to Sevagram (this was the new name given to Segaon on March 5th) and then proceeded, via Calcutta to Ramgarh to help in the Exhibition work. Unfortunately untimely rains proved a great hindrance.

Bapu reached Ramgarh on the 19th of March and opened the Exhibition. The Open Session of the Congress was to begin at 3 p.m. on the same day. I was on my way to see the Exhibition, and had stopped at the Post Office, just near the Congress Pandal, for a few minutes when it began to rain, and it poured so heavily that, within half an hour, knee-deep water had collected all about, and there was a sheet of water everywhere. The pandal was badly damaged. All traffic came to a standstill. The pandal was at the foot of a slope, hence water from all sides accumulated in this hollow area turning it into a

lake, and the platform gave way. The session had to be postponed. With great difficulty I managed to reach Bapuji's hut. He was walking up and down in his verandah, though it was leaking badly. We tried our best to block the leaks. A sheet was hung over Bapu's bed to protect him from the water which dripped down. Some of us slept under his bed for protection from this water nuisance.

People had come, in very large numbers, this year to attend the session. The next day the delegates collected in the open space under the Ashoka Pillar in spite of inclement weather. All resolutions were passed with delegates standing and watching the proceedings. Bapuji delivered his historical speech, and explained the implications of the resolution thus : "Congressmen, and those under Congress influence, cannot help in the prosecution of the War with men, money or materials." Gandhiji said that henceforth "Every Congress Committee should become a Satyagraha Committee." It was for the first time, after six years, since his retirement from the Congress, that Gandhiji addressed the Subjects Committee and the delegates.

That night, he left for Wardha, and I returned to Delhi.

## IX

## INDIVIDUAL SATYAGRAHA

With the approach of May, 1940 preparations for Individual Satyagraha began. I filled in my Satyagraha pledge, and sent it to Bapuji. The pledge ran as follows :

"I desire to enrol myself as an active Satyagrahi. I solemnly declare that:

1. As long as I remain an active Satyagrahi, I shall remain non-violent in word and deed, and shall earnestly endeavour to be non-violent in intent. I believe that in India's present circumstances, non-violence alone can lead to the attainment of Purna Swaraj and the consolidation of unity amongst all races and communities, whether Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsi, Christian or Jew.

2. I believe in, and shall endeavour always to promote, such unity.

3. I believe in the justice of and necessity for removing the evil of untouchability, and shall, on all possible occasions, seek personal contact with, and endeavour to render service to, the oppressed classes.

4. I believe in Swadeshi as essential for India's economic, political and moral salvation, and shall use hand-spun and hand-woven Khaddar to the exclusion of every other cloth. I shall, as far as is possible, use the produce of hand and villgae industries.

5. I shall spin regularly.

6. I shall carry out the instructions of my superior officers and all rules and regulations not inconsistent with the spirit of this pledge, prescribed by any superior Congress organization, or the Working Committee, or any other agency established by the Congress.

7. I am prepared to suffer imprisonment, or even death, for the sake of the cause, and for my country, without resentment.

8. In the event of my imprisonment I shall not claim from the Congress any support for myself, my family, and dependents."

He had entrusted to me the task of collecting the filled-in Satyagraha Pledge forms from Delhi. He was very careful to accept, for this job, only those Satyagrahis whom he knew personally. I undertook a tour of the Delhi villages and started a Satyagraha Camp.

The Working Committee met at Wardha from June 17th to 20th, 1940. Here, a difference of opinion arose, between Gandhiji and the Working Committee members, on the use of violence and non-violence, and Gandhiji was absolved from all responsibility concerning the future programme and activity which the Congress had decided to pursue with regard to external aggression and internal disorder.

Bapuji, accompanied by Mahadevbhai and Pyarelal, went to Delhi from Wardha on June 28th. He stayed at Birla House the whole of that day, and then left that night for Simla to see the Viceroy. He returned to Delhi on the 30th, and stayed with Dr. Shaukat Ansari at Rajpura Road.

He was to leave for Wardha the same evening, but a meeting of the Congress Working Committee was unexpectedly fixed for July 3rd, and he, therefore, had to prolong his stay.

A Spinning Club was started in Delhi. Bapuji took part in mass spinning demonstrations arranged by the members of the club, and addressed the gatherings. He shifted to Birla House. On July 2, 1940 he issued his famous appeal "To Every Briton" to accept the technique of non-violence.

The Working Committee meeting lasted from the 3rd to the 7th of July, when he left for Wardha. Non-violence as a weapon against foreign aggression was repudiated in the meeting. Khan Saheb resigned from the Working Committee because of his adherence to the principle of non-violence.

Gandhiji again visited Delhi on September 26th, and spent the day at Birla House. During this short visit too Bapuji took part in the spinning demonstration held by the members of the Charkha Club at Harijan Niwas and also sold Khadi Hundis. He left for Simla that night, accompanied by Mahadevbhai and Kanu Gandhi. After his interview with the Viceroy, Gandhiji declared, "The immediate issue at stake is the right to exist, which broadly interpreted means free speech. If the Congress has to die, it should do so in the act of proclaiming its faith." After five weeks, the Working Committee met again at Wardha from the 18th to the 23rd and pledged that henceforth the Congress would act according to Gandhiji's command, and humbly requested him to guide the Congress once more.

He was to start, by car, from Simla on the 30th of September. Devadasji sent me to Ambala to receive him and from thence to bring him in comfort to Delhi. He reached Ambala at 1-40 a.m., stopped his car, took me in, and said, "So you have come ; I have no worry now." What confidence he had in me !

I sat in the car, and he dropped asleep. We kept driving throughout the night and reached Birla House at 5-30 a.m. Mahadevbhai followed us in another car. He took a wrong route and did not reach Delhi at the same time we did, and Bapu worried about him. However, he reached Birla House an hour later, and only then was

Bapuji relieved. He left for Wardha the same evening, i.e. on the 1st of October.

The Individual Satyagraha movement commenced on October 17, 1940, according to his orders. Shri Vinoba Bhave was the first Satyagrahi chosen to offer Satyagraha at Paunar. He was arrested on the 21st. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was to follow him, but he was arrested on the 31st of October — before the appointed time. It was due to his arrest that Bapuji decided to select an ordinary and unknown Satyagrahi, by name Brahma Dutt, to offer Satyagraha on the fixed date. Gandhiji also suspended publishing his various Weeklies from October 31st, as the Government had forbidden the Press from reporting the progress of the campaign.

I went to see him at Wardha on the 5th of November. Rumour had it that he was going on a fast, but on reaching there I found that it was baseless. I had a talk with him about starting a Satyagraha movement in Delhi as well. He wanted me to be the first Satyagrahi from there, but I argued that as Mr Asaf Ali was the President of the Provincial Congress Committee he should make the start. Bapuji approved of my suggestion and I, having obtained his blessing, returned to Delhi on the 10th of November.

I continued my tour of the Delhi villages ; and held meetings where I spoke on the duties of Satyagrahis and explained the Congress attitude towards the war aims. January 7, 1941 was fixed for me to offer Satyagraha, but I was arrested on the 31st December, 1940 and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment with a fine of Rs 100/-, for making two speeches against recruitment to the Army. I was put in the Gujarat Special Jail, and then was transferred to the Lahore Central Jail, Punjab, where I completed my term of imprisonment. While I was in jail, Bapu came to Delhi several times, in connection with Cripps Mission, which had been sent to India, with the hope of arriving at some settlement with the Congress.

I received letters from Bapu during my imprisonment. In one of them, dated 11-5-'41, he wrote :

"I have received all your letters, replies to which have been penned by Mahadev. It is strange indeed that you have not yet received some of those. I understand what you mean. All of us should act according to our inner promptings, and the result is with God.

"I like your taking Gita classes. I wish that Koran classes could also be held and that we may learn from them to respect one another's religion.

"I have Bhai Farid's letter. I shall not reply to him separately. I am glad that he has made good progress in Hindi, and that everybody there is learning both the scripts. I visualize good results out of it. We should progress to such an extent that we are all able to read and write both Urdu and Hindi easily. At least, the Congressites should do as much. I am keeping quite fit. Bande Mataram, and Blessings to all. I hope you are keeping good health.

"Let all learn the Hindi and Urdu scripts and speak both the languages."

After a year, he suspended the movement for some time. Many of the Satyagrahis had been released, but not I, because those who lived with Gandhiji were considered more dangerous, and hence liable to harder punishment.

This year we celebrated Gandhiji's Birthday in Gujarat Jail, with great enthusiasm, and sent 4,13,548 yards of yarn spun by the Satyagrahis, in 15 days as a present to Bapuji. Besides this, I sent a Dhoti made of my yarn as a present to him. Bapuji wrote in a letter to me, "I am using the Dhoti sent by you. May God bless you." (Sevagram, 2-10-'41)

In reply to my report about Gandhi Jayanti, he replied on 13-10-'41 as under :

"I am very glad to read your letter, and to know about the quantity of yarn spun. I am receiving similar accounts from everywhere. If all develop the same faith in Khadi's constructive use, it will be very good. Give thanks and congratulations to all. Whoever wants to keep his yarn for himself may do so. I would like everybody to have Khadi

clothes made out of his own yarn. Just as spinning wheels are introduced in jails, likewise handlooms should be introduced, and hand-spun yarn should be woven on them. This can easily be done."

# X

## THE "QUIT INDIA" MOVEMENT

Most of the individual Satyagrahis were released in December, 1941, by a decision of the Government, dated December 3rd, but I was released much later on the 9th of May, 1942, from the Lahore Central Jail. As I have said, those who were closely associated with Gandhiji were considered more dangerous than other followers of his, and the Government took good care to retain them in jail as long as possible. I was told that Mahadevbhai had to intervene on my behalf and even see the Home Member before I was released.

During my absence, Bapuji had gone to Bardoli for a month in December, 1941. The Working Committee met there, from December 23rd to 30th, and once again Gandhiji was relieved of the Congress leadership, due to fundamental differences over the policy of non-violence; but soon afterwards in January, 1942 the Working Committee and the A. I. C. C. met at Wardha, from the 13th to 16th, and Gandhiji was once again vested with the authority of guiding the country, which he accepted on his own terms.

From January 18th, he began to publish his Weeklies again, which had been suspended for the past 15 months. Meanwhile, the war situation had considerably deteriorated and the Japanese menace to India had become grim. Rangoon had fallen. On March 11th the Churchill Government announced the Cripps Mission to India. Sir Stafford Cripps reached Delhi on the 25th of March. Those of us in the Lahore Jail were following the progress of the discussions with keen interest. Our hopes were aroused and we expected something big to ensue, as a result of the Mission.

Though Gandhiji met Cripps on the 27th, he remained in Delhi till April 5. When he described the proposals as "A post-dated cheque on a crashing bank" all our hopes of settlement were dashed to pieces. Gandhiji now thought in terms of complete withdrawal of British control from India. In his famous interview on May 24, he said :

"It has cost me much to come to the conclusion that the British should withdraw from India. Under my proposal, they have to leave India in God's hands — but, in modern parlance, to anarchy, and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time, or to unrestrained dacoities. From these, a true India will arise in the place of the false one we now see."

Bapuji decided to start a new movement of resistance ; and to prepare the country for Independence he began to write articles in his Weeklies, which roused the enthusiastic support of the whole country.

After my release, I went to Sevagram to see him on June 14. One and a half years had elapsed since I last saw him, hence my joy knew no bounds, but alas ! I got fever and was not allowed to stay long. The Ashram was humming with the conversation and activities of many visitors, and a new wave of loyalty to his cause was seen in the people. Bahen Satyawati, who had just been released from prison, now kept her long-standing promise to visit Sevagram ; she came to see Bapu, and get his instructions for the coming movement. I had to return to Delhi with her on the 6th July. The same day, the Working Committee meeting was held at Sevagram. It lasted till the 14th, when the memorable "Quit India" resolution was announced, and Gandhiji was requested to lead the country in case of a struggle.

The session of the A. I. C. C. to be held in Bombay on August 7th later proved to be a historic one. I started on August 4th to attend this session. Bapuji was staying at Birla House. I acquainted him with the conditions in Delhi and informed him that he and other Working Committee members were going to be arrested just after the A. I. C. C.

Session. The "Quit India" resolution was passed on the night of 8th August, when Bapu delivered a great and unforgettable speech on that occasion. He appealed to all to participate in the final struggle for freedom and to adhere to truth and non-violence. He invited everybody to join in the epic attempt to liberate the motherland.

The following is the full text of the speech delivered by Mahatma Gandhi in Hindustani, on the evening of the 8th August, after the A. I. C. C. had passed the "Quit India" resolution, sanctioning Mass Civil Disobedience:

"I congratulate you on the resolution that you have just passed. I also congratulate the three comrades on the courage they have shown in pressing their amendments to a division, even though they knew that there was an overwhelming majority in favour of the resolution, and I congratulate the thirteen friends who voted against the resolution. In doing so, they had nothing to be ashamed of. For the last twenty years we have tried to learn not to lose courage, even when we are in a hopeless minority, and are laughed at. We have learned to hold on to our beliefs in the confidence that we are in the right. It behoves us to cultivate this courage of conviction, for it ennobles man and raises his moral stature. I was, therefore, glad to see that these friends had imbibed the principle which I have tried to follow for the last fifty years and more.

"Having congratulated them on their courage, let me say that what they asked this Committee to accept, through their amendments, was not a correct representation of the situation. These friends ought to have pondered over the appeal made to them by the Maulana to withdraw their amendments; they should have carefully followed the explanations given by Jawaharlal. Had they done so, it would have been clear to them that the right, which they now want the Congress to concede, has already been conceded by the Congress.

"Time was when every Mussalman claimed the whole of India as his motherland. During the years that the Ali Brothers were with me, the assumption underlying all their

talks and discussions was that India belonged as much to the Mussalmans as to the Hindus. I can testify to the fact that this was their innermost conviction and not a mask. I lived with them for years. I spent days and nights in their company. And I make bold to say that their utterances were the honest expression of their beliefs. I know there are some who say that I take things too readily at their face value, that I am gullible. I do not think I am such a simpleton, nor am I so gullible, as these friends take me to be. But their criticism does not hurt me. I should prefer to be considered gullible rather than deceitful.

"What these Communist friends proposed through their amendments is nothing new. It has been repeated from thousands of platforms. Thousands of Mussalmans have told me, that if the Hindu-Muslim question is to be solved satisfactorily, it must be done in my lifetime. I should feel flattered at this ; but how can I agree to a proposal which does not appeal to my reason ? Hindu-Muslim unity is not a new thing. Millions of Hindus and Mussalmans have sought it. I consciously strove, from my boyhood, for its achievement. While at school, I made it a point to cultivate the friendship of Muslim and Parsi co-students. I believed even at that tender age that the Hindus in India, if they wished to live in peace and amity with the other communities, should assiduously cultivate the virtue of neighbourliness. I felt that it would not matter much, if I made no special efforts to cultivate the friendship of Hindus, but that I must make friends with at least a few Mussalmans. It was as counsel for a Mussalman merchant that I first went to South Africa. I made friends with other Mussalmans there, even with the opponents of my client, and gained a reputation for integrity and good faith. I had among my friends and co-workers Muslims as well as Parsis. I won their hearts and when I finally sailed for India, I left them sad and shedding tears of grief at the separation.

"In India too I continued my efforts, and left no stone unturned, to achieve that unity. It was my lifelong aspiration for communal unity that made me offer my fullest

co-operation to the Mussalmans in the Khilafat Movement. Muslims throughout the country accepted me as their true friend.

"How then is it that I should now be regarded as so evil and hostile to Muslims? Had I any axe to grind in supporting the Khilafat Movement? True, I did in my heart of hearts cherish a hope that it might enable me to save the cow. I am a worshipper of the cow. I believe the cow and myself to be the creation of the same God, and I am prepared to sacrifice my life in order to save her. But whatever my philosophy of life and my ultimate hopes, I joined the movement in no spirit of bargain. I co-operated in the struggle for the Khilafat solely in order to discharge my obligation to my neighbour who, I saw, was in distress. The Ali Brothers, had they been alive today, would have testified to the truth of this assertion. And so would have Maulana Abdul Bari Saheb. Khwaja Abdul Majid, Shweib Qureshi and others would even today bear me out in that it was not a bargain on my part for saving the cow. The cow like the Khilafat stood on her own merits. As an honest man, a true neighbour, and a faithful friend, it was incumbent on me to stand by the Mussalmans in the hour of their trial.

"In those days I shocked the Hindus by dining with the Mussalmans, though with the passage of time they slowly got used to it. Maulana Bari told me, however, that though he would insist on having me as his guest, he would not allow me to dine with him, lest some day he should be accused of a sinister motive. And so, whenever I had occasion to stay with him, he called a Brahman cook and made special arrangements for separate cooking. Firangi Mahal, his residence, was an old style structure with limited accommodation; yet he cheerfully bore all hardships and carried out his resolve from which I could not dissuade him. It was the spirit of courtesy, dignity and nobility that inspired us in those days. Members of each community vied with one another in accommodating members of sister communities. They respected one another's religious feelings, and considered it a privilege

to do so. Not a trace of suspicion lurked in anybody's heart. Where has all that spirit of goodwill and nobility fled to now? I should ask all Mussalmans, including the Qaid-e-Azam, to recall those glorious days and to find out what has brought us to the present impasse. The Qaid-e-Azam himself was at one time a Congressman. If today the Congress has incurred his wrath, it is because the canker of suspicion has entered his heart. May God bless him with long life, but when I am gone, he will realize and admit that I had no designs on the Mussalmans and that I had never betrayed their interests. Where can I go, or what shall I do, if I injure their cause or betray their interests? My life is entirely at their disposal. They are free to put an end to it whenever they wish to do so. Assaults have been made on my life in the past, but God has spared me till now, and the assailants have repented for their action. But if someone were to shoot me in the belief that he was getting rid of a scoundrel, he would kill not the real Gandhi, but the one that appeared to him a scoundrel.

"To those who have been indulging in a campaign of abuse and vilification I would say, 'Islam enjoins you not to revile even an enemy. The Prophet treated even enemies with kindness and tried to win them over by his fairness and generosity. Are you followers of the same Islam, or of any other faith? If you are followers of true Islam, does it behove you to distrust the words of one who makes a public declaration of his faith? You may take it from me that one day you will regret the fact that you distrusted and killed one who was a true and devoted friend. It cuts me to the quick to see that the more I appeal, the more the Maulana importunes, the more intense does the campaign of vilification grow. To me these abuses are like bullets. They can kill me, even as a bullet can put an end to my life. You may kill me but that will not hurt me. But what of those who indulge in mere abuse? They bring discredit to Islam. For the fair name of Islam, I appeal to you to desist from this unceasing campaign of abuse and vilification.

"The Maulana Saheb is being made a target for the filthiest abuse, because he refuses to exert on me the pressure of his friendship. He realizes that it is a misuse of friendship to seek to compel a friend to accept as truth what he knows is an untruth.

"To the Qaid-e-Azam I would say: "Whatever is true and valid in the claim for Pakistan is already in your hands. What is wrong and untenable is in nobody's gift so that it can be made over to you. Even if someone were to succeed in imposing an untruth on others, he would not be able to enjoy for long the fruits of such coercion. God dislikes pride and keeps away from those displaying it. God will not tolerate forcible imposition of an untruth.

"The Qaid-e-Azam says that he is compelled to say bitter things, and that he cannot help giving expression to his thoughts and feelings. Similarly I would say: 'I consider myself a friend of the Mussalmans. Why should I then not give expression to the things nearest to my heart, even at the cost of displeasing them? How can I conceal my innermost thoughts from them? I should congratulate the Qaid-e-Azam on his frankness in giving expression to his thoughts and feelings even if they sound bitter to his hearers. But even so, why should the Mohammedans, sitting here be reviled if they do not see eye to eye with him? If millions of Muslims are with you, can you not afford to ignore the handful of Mussalmans who may appear to you to be misguided? Why should one with a following of several millions, be afraid of a majority community, or of the minority being swamped by the majority? How did the Prophet work among the Arabs and Mussalmans? How did he propagate Islam? Did he say he would propagate Islam only when he commanded a majority? I, therefore, appeal to you for the sake of Islam to ponder over what I say. There is neither fair play nor justice in saying that the Congress must accept a thing even if it does not believe in it, and even if it goes counter to principles it holds dear.

"Rajaji once said to me: 'I do not believe in Pakistan. But the Muslims ask for it; Mr Jinnah asks for it; and it

has now become an obsession with them. Why not then say 'yes' to them? The same Mr Jinnah will later on realize the disadvantages of Pakistan and will forego the demand.' I said it is not fair to accept as true a thing which I hold to be untrue, and ask others to do so in the belief that the demand will not be pressed when the time comes for settling it finally. If I hold the demand to be just I should concede it this very day. I should not agree to it merely in order to placate Jinnah Saheb. Many friends have come and asked me to agree to it for the time being, in order to placate Mr Jinnah and disarm his suspicions, and to see how he reacts to it. But I cannot be party to a course of action with a false promise. At any rate it is not my method.

"The Congress has no sanction but the moral one for enforcing its decisions. It believes that true Democracy can only be the outcome of non-violence. The structure of a World Federation can be raised only on a foundation of non-violence, and violence will have to be totally abjured from world affairs. If this is true, the solution of the Hindu-Muslim question too cannot be achieved by a resort to violence. If Hindus tyrannize over Mussalmans, with what authority can they talk of a World Federation? It is for this reason that I do not believe in the possibility of establishing World Peace through violence, as the English and American statesmen propose to do. The Congress has agreed to submitting all differences to an impartial International Tribunal, and to abide by its decisions. If even this fairest of proposals is unacceptable, the only course that remains open is that of the sword — of violence. How can I then persuade myself to agree to an impossibility? To demand the vivisection of a living organism is to ask for its very life. It is a call to war. The Congress cannot be party to such a fratricidal war. Those Hindus who, like Dr. Moonje and Shri Savarkar, believe in the doctrine of the sword, may seek to keep the Mohammedans under Hindu domination. I do not represent that section. I represent the Congress. You want to kill the Congress

which is the goose that lays the golden eggs. If you distrust the Congress, you may rest assured that there will be perpetual war between the Hindus and the Mussalmans, and that the country will be doomed to continued warfare and bloodshed. If such warfare is to be our lot, I shall not live to witness it.

"It is for that reason that I say to Jinnah Saheb, 'You may take it from me that whatever in your demand for Pakistan accords with considerations of justice and equity is lying in your pocket; whatever in the demand is contrary to justice and equity you can take only by the sword and in no other manner.'

"There is much in my heart that I would like to pour out before this Assembly. One thing which was uppermost in my heart I have already dealt with, and it is with me a matter of life and death. If we Hindus and Muslims mean to achieve a heart-unity without the slightest mental reservation on the part of either, we must first unite in the effort to be free from the shackles of this Empire. If Pakistan after all is to be a portion of India, what objection can there be for Muslims for joining in this struggle for India's freedom? The Hindus and Mussalmans must, therefore, unite in the first instance, on the issue of fighting for freedom. Jinnah Saheb thinks the war will last long. I do not agree with him. If the war goes on for six months more, how shall we be able to save China?

"I therefore want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn, if it can be had. Freedom cannot now wait for the realization of communal unity. If that unity is not achieved, sacrifices necessary for it will have to be much greater than would have otherwise sufficed. But the Congress must win freedom, or be wiped out in the effort. And do not forget that the freedom, which the Congress is struggling to achieve, will not be for Congressmen alone but for all the forty crores of the Indian people. Congressmen must for ever remain humble servants of the people.

"The Qaid-e-Azam has said that the Muslim League is prepared to take over the reins of Government from the

Britishers if they are willing to hand it over to the League, for the British took over the Empire from the hands of the Muslims. This, however, will be Muslim Raj. The offer made by Maulana Saheb and by me does not imply the establishment of Muslim Raj or Muslim domination. The Congress does not believe in the domination of any one group or community. It believes in a Democracy which includes in its orbit Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Parsis, and Jews, — every one of the communities inhabiting this vast country. If Muslim Raj is inevitable, then let it be; but how can we give it the stamp of our assent? How can we agree to the domination of one community over the others?

"Millions of Mussalmans in this country come from Hindu stock. How can their homeland be any other than India? My eldest son embraced Islam some years back. Which would his homeland be, — Porbandar or the Punjab? I ask the Mohammedans, 'If India is not your homeland, to what other country do you belong? Where would you put my son, who embraced Islam?' His mother wrote him a letter after his conversion asking him if he had, on embracing Islam, given up drinking which Islam forbids to its followers. To those who gloated over the conversion, she wrote saying, 'I do not mind his becoming a Mussalman as much as I object to his drinking. Will you, as pious followers of the Prophet, tolerate his drinking even after his conversion? He has reduced himself to the state of a rake by drinking. If you are going to make a man of him again, his conversion will have been turned to good account. You will, therefore, please see that he as a Mussalman abjures wine and women. If that change does not come about, his conversion is in vain and our non-co-operation with him will have to continue.'

"India is without doubt the homeland of all the Muslims inhabiting this country. Every Mussalman should, therefore, co-operate in the fight for India's freedom. The Congress does not belong to any one class

or community; it belongs to the whole nation. It is open to the Mussalmans to take possession of the Congress. They can, if they like, swamp the Congress by their numbers and can steer it along the course which appeals to them. The Congress is fighting not on behalf of the Hindus, but on behalf of the whole nation, including the minorities. It would hurt me to hear of a single instance of a Mohammedan being killed by a Congressman. In the coming revolution Congressmen will sacrifice their lives in order to protect the Mussalman against a Hindu's attack, and vice versa. It is a part of their creed, and is one of the essentials of non-violence. You will be expected, on occasions like these, not to lose your heads. Every Congressman, whether a Hindu or a Muslim, owes this duty to the organization to which he belongs. The Mussalman who acts in this manner will render a service to Islam. Mutual trust is essential for success in the final nationwide struggle that is to come.

"I have said that much greater sacrifices will have to be made this time in the final struggle for Independence because of the opposition from the Muslim League and from the British. You have seen the secret circular issued by Sir Fredric Puckle. It is a suicidal course that he has taken. It contains an open incitement to those organizations which crop up like mushrooms to combine together to fight the Congress. We have thus to deal with an Empire, whose ways are crooked. Ours is a straight path; we can tread it even with our eyes closed. That is the beauty of Satyagraha.

"In Satyagraha there is no place for fraud or falsehood or any kind of untruth. Fraud and untruth today are stalking the world. I cannot be a helpless witness to such a situation. I have travelled all over India as perhaps nobody in the present age has. The voiceless millions of the land saw in me their friend and representative, and I identified myself with them to the extent it was possible for a mere human being to do. I saw trust in their eyes, which I now want to turn to good account in fighting

this Empire, upheld on untruth and violence. However gigantic the preparations that Empire has made, we must get out of its clutches. How can I remain silent in this supreme hour and hide my light under a bushel? Shall I ask the Japanese to tarry a while? If today I sit quiet and remain inactive, God will take me to task for not using the treasure, He has given me, in the midst of the conflagration that is enveloping the whole world. Had it not been so, I should have asked you to wait a little longer, as I asked you to wait all these years. But the situation now has become intolerable, and the Congress has no other course left to it.

"Nevertheless, the actual struggle does not commence from this moment. You have only placed all your powers in my hands. I will now wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. That process is likely to take two or three weeks. What could you do in the meanwhile? What is the programme, for the interval, in which all can participate? As you know, the spinning wheel is the first thing that occurs to me. I made the same suggestion to the Maulana in reply to his question, but he would have none of it at the time, though later on he undestood its import. The fourteen-fold constructive programme is of course there for you to carry out. What more should you do? I will tell you. Every one of you should, from this moment onwards, consider yourself a free man or woman, and act as if you are free and are no longer under the heel of this Imperialism.

"It is not make-believe that I am suggesting to you. It is the very essence of freedom. The bond of the slave is snapped the moment he considers himself a free being. He will plainly tell the master: 'I was your bondslave till this moment, but I am a slave no longer. You may kill me if you like, but if you keep me alive, I wish to tell you that if you release me from the bondage, of your own accord, I will ask for nothing more from you. You used to feed and clothe me, though I could have provided food and clothing for myself by my labour. Up till now I depended on you

instead of on God for food and raiment. But God has now inspired me with an urge for freedom, and I am today a free man, and will no longer depend on you.'

"You may take it from me that I am not going to strike a bargain with the Viceroy for Ministries and the like. I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. Maybe he will propose the abolition of the Salt Tax, the drink evil, etc. But I will say 'Nothing less than Freedom'.

"Here is a Mantra — a short one — that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The Mantra is: *We shall do or die*. We shall either free India, or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery. Every true Congressman or woman will join in the struggle with an inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery. Let that be your pledge. Keep jails out of your consideration. If the Government keeps me free, I will spare you the trouble of filling the jails. I will not put on the Government the strain of maintaining a large number of prisoners at a time when it is in trouble. Let every man and woman, hereafter, live each moment of his or her life in the consciousness that he or she eats and lives for the goal of achieving freedom and will die, if need be, to attain it. Take a pledge, with God and your own conscience as witness, that you will no longer rest till freedom is achieved, and will be prepared to lay down your lives in the effort to achieve it. He who loses his life will gain it; he who will seek to save it shall lose it. Freedom is not for the coward or the faint-hearted.

"A word to Journalists. I congratulate you on the support you have hitherto given to the national demand. I know the restrictions and handicaps under which you have to labour. But I would now ask you to snap the chains that bind you. It should be the proud privilege of the newspapers to lead and set an example in laying down one's life for freedom. You have the use of the pen, which the Government cannot suppress. I know you have large

properties in the form of printing presses etc., and that you quite naturally would be afraid lest the Government should attach them. I do not ask you, voluntarily, to invite an attachment of the printing press. As for myself, I would not suppress wielding my pen, even if the press were to be attached. Perhaps you know that in the past my press was attached, but it was returned later on. But I do not ask from you that final sacrifice. I suggest a middle way. You should now wind up your Standing Committee, and declare that you will give up writing under the present restrictions, and take up your pen again only when India has finally won her freedom. You can tell Sir Fredric Puckle that he cannot expect from you a command-performance, that his press-notes are full of untruth, and that you will refuse to publish them. And you can openly declare that you are whole-heartedly with the Congress. If you do this, you will change the atmosphere even before the fight actually begins.

"From the Princes I ask, with all due respect due to them, a very small thing. I am a well-wisher of the Princes. I was born in an Indian State. My father was Prime Minister in three States. He once refused to salute the British Political Agent saying he would salute none except his own Prince. But he did not say to the Prince, as I feel he ought to have said, that he could not compel him — his minister — to act against his conscience. I have eaten the Princes' salt, and I would not be false to it. As a faithful servant, it is my duty to warn them that if they will act while I am still alive, they may come to occupy an honourable place in Free India. In Jawaharlal's Scheme of Free India neither privileges nor privileged classes have a place. Jawaharlal considers all property to be State-owned. He wants a Planned Economy. He wants to reconstruct India according to plan. He likes to fly ; I don't. I have kept a place in the India I envisage for the Princes and the Zamindars. I would ask them in all humility to enjoy their property through renunciation. They can renounce ownership over their properties and become their trustees in the true sense

of the term. I visualize the image of God in this vast assemblage of people, from all parts of India. I worship the people as God. The Princes may say to their people : 'You are the owners and masters of the State and we are your servants.' I would ask the Princes to become servants of the people, and render to them an account of their own services. The Empire too can bestow power on the Princes, but they ought to prefer deriving power from their own people ; and if they want to indulge in some innocent pleasures, they can do so as servants of the people. I do not want the Princes to live as paupers. But I would ask them : 'Do you want to remain slaves for all time ? Instead of paying homage to a foreign power, why should you not accept the sovereignty of your own people ? You may write to the Political Department : 'The people are now awake. How are we to withstand an avalanche before which even large empires are crumbling ? We shall therefore belong to the people from today onwards. We shall sink or swim with them.' Believe me there is nothing unconstitutional in the course I am suggesting. There are, so far as I know, no treaties enabling the Empire to coerce the Princes. The peoples of the States will also declare that, though they are the Princes' subjects, they are also part of the Indian nation and that they will accept the leadership of the Princes, if the latter cast in their lot with the people, but not otherwise. If this declaration enrages the Princes and they choose to kill the people, the latter will meet death bravely and unflinchingly, but will not retract their words.

"Nothing, however, should be done secretly. This is an open rebellion. In this struggle secrecy is a sin. A free man should not engage in a secret movement. It is likely that when you gain freedom you will have a C. I. D. of your own in spite of my advice to the contrary. But in the present struggle we have to work openly, and receive bullets in our chests, if need be, without taking to our heels. In a struggle of this character all secrecy is sin and must be punctiliously avoided.

"I have a word to say to Government servants also. They need not resign their posts just yet. The late Justice Ranade did not resign his post, but he openly declared that he belonged to the Congress. He said to the Government that though he was a Judge, he was a Congressman as well and would openly attend the sessions of the Congress, but that at the same time he would not let his political views warp his impartiality on the Bench. He held the Social Reform Conference in the very pandal of the Congress. I would ask all Government servants to follow in the footsteps of Ranade and declare their allegiance to the Congress, as an answer to the secret circular issued by Sir Fredric Puckle.

"This is all that I ask of you just now. I will now write to the Viceroy. You will be able to read the correspondence that passes between us when I publish it, with the Viceroy's consent. But you are free to aver that you support the demand to be put forth in my letter. A judge came to me and said: 'We get secret circulars from high quarters. What are we to do?' I said, 'If I were in your place, I would ignore the circulars.' You may openly say to the Government: 'I have received your secret circular. I am, however, on the side of the Congress. Though I serve the Government for my livelihood, I am not going to obey these secret circulars or to employ underhand methods.'

"Soldiers too are covered by the present programme. I do not ask them just now to resign their posts and leave the army. Soldiers come to me, to Jawaharlal, and to the Maulana and say: 'We are wholly with you. We are tired of Governmental tyranny.' To these soldiers I suggest that you tell the Government, 'Our hearts are with the Congress. We are not going to leave our posts. We will serve you as long as we receive our salaries from you. We will obey your just orders, but will refuse to fire on our own people.'

"To those who lack the courage to do this much I have nothing to say. They will go their own way. But if you can

do this much, you may take it from me that the whole atmosphere will be electrified. Let the Government then shower bombs if it likes, but no power on earth will be able to keep you in bondage any longer.

"If the students want to join temporarily in the struggle and then return to their studies, I feel it would be better for them to stick to their studies for the present. However till such a time as I frame a programme for the struggle, I ask students to say to their professors: 'We belong to the Congress. Do you belong to the Congress or to the Government? If you belong to the Congress, you need not vacate your posts. You will remain, but pray teach us and lead us to Freedom.' In all fights for freedom the world over students have made a worthwhile contribution.

"If in the interval that is left to us, before the actual fight begins, you do even the little that I have suggested to you, you will change the atmosphere, and thus will have prepared the ground for the next step.

"There is much I should still like to say. But my heart is heavy. I have already taken up a great deal of your time. Furthermore I wish also to say a few words in English. I thank you for the patience and attention with which you have listened to me even at this late hour. It is just what true soldiers would do. For the last twenty-two years I have controlled my speech and my pen, and have stored up my energy. Only he who does not fritter away his energy, is a true Brahmachari. He will, therefore, always control his speech, and this I have consciously tried to do all these years. But today is the occasion when I must unburden my heart to you. I have done so even at the risk of straining your patience; and I do not regret having done it, for I have now given you my message and through you, I have delivered it to the whole of India."

Thereafter Mahatma Gandhi spoke in English as follows:

"I have taken such an inordinately long time over pouring out what was agitating my soul to those whom I

had just now the privilege of serving. I have been called their Leader, or, in military language, their Commander. But I do not look at my position in that light. I have no weapon but love to wield my authority over anyone. I do, however, sport a stick, which you can break into bits without much exertion. It is simply my staff with the help of which I walk. Such a cripple as I is not elated when he is called upon to bear the great burden. You can share that burden, only when I appear before you, not as your commander, but as a humble servant. And he who serves best is the chief among equals.

"Therefore I was bound to share with you such thoughts as were welling up in my breast and tell you, in as summary a manner as I can, what I expect you to do as the first step.

"Let me tell you at the outset, that the real struggle does not commence today. I have yet to go through much ceremony, as I always do. The burden is almost unbearable, and I have got to continue to reason in those circles with whom I have lost my credit for the time being. I know that in the course of the last few weeks, I have forfeited my credit with a large number of friends, so much so that some of them have now begun to doubt not only my wisdom but even my honesty. I hold that my wisdom is not such a great treasure that I cannot afford to lose it, but I do believe that my honesty is a precious treasure, which I can ill-afford to lose.

"Such occasions arise in the life of a man who is a pure seeker after truth, and who would seek to serve humanity and his country to the best of his ability without fear or hypocrisy. For the last 50 years I have known no other way. I have been a humble servant of humanity and have rendered, on more than one occasion, such service as I could to the Empire; and here let me say, without fear of challenge, that throughout my career never have I asked for any personal favour. I have enjoyed the privilege of friendship, as I enjoy it today, with Lord Linlithgow. It is a friendship which has outgrown official relationship.

Whether Lord Linlithgow will bear me out I do not know; but there has sprung up a personal bond between him and myself. He once introduced me to his daughter. His son-in-law, the A.D.C., was drawn towards me. He fell in love with Mahadev more than with me, and Lady Anne and he came to see me. She is an obedient and favourite daughter. I take an interest in their welfare. I take the liberty of giving you these tit-bits of information only in order to give you some idea of the personal bond which exists between us. And yet, let me declare here that no personal bond will ever interfere with the stubborn struggle which, if it falls to my lot, I may have to launch against Lord Linlithgow as the representative of the Empire. It seems to me I will have to resist the might of that Empire with the might of the dumb millions, with no limit but that of non-violence as the policy confined to this struggle. It is a terrible job to have to offer resistance to a Viceroy with whom I enjoy such relations. He has more than once trusted my word, often about my people. I mention this with great pride and pleasure. I mention it as a bond of my desire to be true to the British nation, to be true to the Empire. I mention it to testify that when that Empire forfeited my trust, the Englishman who was its Viceroy came to know it.

"Then there is the sacred memory of Charlie Andrews which wells up within me at this moment. The spirit of Andrews hovers about me. For me, he sums up the best traditions of English culture. I enjoyed closer relations with him than with most Indians. I enjoyed his confidence. There were no secrets between us. We had heart-to-heart talks everyday. He would blurt out whatever was in his heart without the slightest hesitation or reservation. It is true he was a friend of Gurudev's, but he looked upon him with awe, not that Gurudev wanted it. Andrews had that peculiar humility. But with me, he became the closest friend. Years ago he came to me with a note of introduction from Gokhale. Both Pearson and he are unfortunately gone. They were the finest examples of cultured Englishmen. I know that the spirit of Andrews is listening to me while I talk.

"I have just received a cordial telegram, from the Metropolitan of Calcutta, conveying his blessings, though, I know, he is opposed to my move today. I hold him to be a man of God. I can understand the language of his heart, and I know that his heart is with me.

"With this background, I want to declare to the world that, whatever may be said to the contrary, and that although I might have forefeited the regard and even the trust of many friends in the West, and I bow my head low—but even for their friendship or their love, I must not suppress the voice within—call it 'conscience', or call it the prompting of my inner basic nature. Whatever it is, there is a certain 'something' within me impelling me to cry out my agony. I have known humanity ; I have also studied some psychology, though I have not read many books on it. Such a man knows exactly what it is. That 'something' in me, which never deceives me, tells me now: 'You have to stand against the whole world, although you may have to stand alone. You have to stare the world in the face, though it may look back at you with bloodshot eyes. Do not fear. Trust that little thing which resides in the heart.' It says: 'Forsake friends, wife, all ; but testify to that for which you have lived, and for which you have to die.'

"Believe me, friends, I am not anxious to die. I want to live my full span of life. According to me, that is at least 120 years. By that time India will be free, the world will be free. Let me tell you too, that I do not regard England, or for that matter, America, as free countries. They are free after their own fashion, free to hold in bondage the coloured races of the earth. Are England and America fighting for the liberty of these races today? You shall not limit my concept of freedom. Neither the English and American teachers, nor their history, nor their magnificent poetry have said that you shall not broaden the interpretation of that freedom, and according to my interpretation of that freedom, I am constrained to say they are strangers to that freedom which their poets and

teachers have described. If they would like to know real freedom, they should come to India. They have to come, not with pride or arrogance, but in the spirit of real earnest seekers of Truth.

" It is the fundamental truth with which India has been experimenting for twenty-two-years. Unconsciously, from its very foundations, long ago, the Congress has departed though non-violently from what is known as the constitutional method. Dadabhai and Pherozeshah who held the Congress India in the palm of their hands had held on to the latter. They were lovers of the Congress. They were its masters. But above all, they were real servants. They never countenanced murder and secrecy and the like. I confess there are many black sheep amongst us Congressmen. But I trust the whole of India to launch upon a non-violent struggle on the widest scale. I trust the innate goodness of human nature which perceives the truth and prevails during a crisis, as if by instinct. But, even if I am deceived in this, I shall not swerve. From its very inception, the Congress based its policy on peaceful methods and the subsequent generations added non-co-operation. When Dadabhai entered the British Parliament, Salisbury dubbed him as a black man, but the English people defeated Salisbury, and Dadabhai went to Parliament by their vote. India was delirious with joy. These things, however, now India has outgrown.

" It is with all these factors as the background that I want Englishmen, Europeans, and all the United Nations to examine their hearts and find what crime India has committed in demanding Independence today. I ask : 'Is it right for you to distrust us ? Is it right to distrust such an organization with its background, tradition, and record of over half a century, and misrepresent its endeavours, before the entire world, by every means at your command ? Is it right, I ask, that by hook or by crook, aided by the Foreign Press, aided, I hope not, by the President of the U. S. A. or even by the Generalissimo of China, who has

yet to win his laurels, you should present India's struggle in a shocking light ? '

" I have met the inscrutable Generalissimo, and have got to know him, somewhat through Madam Chiang, who was my interpreter. He allowed me to read his mind through her. He has not, as yet, said that we were wrong in demanding our Independence. There is a chorus of disapproval and protest all over the world against us. They say we are erring, and that the move is inopportune. I had great regard for the British, but now British diplomacy stinks in my nostrils. Yet others are learning their lessons. They may succeed through these methods in getting world opinion on their side for a time ; but India will raise her voice against all the organized propaganda. I will speak against it. Even if the whole world forsakes me, I will say : ' You are wrong, India will wrench, with non-violence, her liberty from unwilling hands.'

" Even if my eyes close, and there is no freedom for India, non-violence will not end. They will be dealing a mortal blow to China and to Russia if they oppose the freedom of non-violent India, which, today, is pleading on bended knees for the fulfilment of a debt long overdue. Does a creditor ever go to a debtor like that ? And even when India is met with such angry opposition, she says : ' We won't hit below the belt. We have learnt sufficient gentlemanliness. We are pledged to non-violence.' I have been the author of the non-embarrassment policy of the Congress, and yet today you find me talking this strong language. My non-embarrassment plea was always qualified by the proviso ' consistent with our honour and safety '. If a man holds me by the neck and wants to drown me, may I not directly struggle with him to free myself ? There is no inconsistency in our position today.

" There are representatives of the Foreign Press assembled here today. Through them I wish to say to the world, that the United Nations, who say that they have need for India, have the opportunity now to declare India free, and prove their bona fides. If they miss it, they will

be missing the opportunity of their lifetime, and history will record that they did not discharge their obligations to India in time, and lost battle. I want the blessings of the whole world so that I may succeed with them. I do not want the United Powers to go beyond their obvious limitations. I do not want them to accept non-violence and disarm today. There is a fundamental difference between Fascism and the Imperialism I am fighting. Do the British get from India all they want ? What they get today is from the India they hold in bondage. Think what a difference it would make if India were to participate as a free ally. That freedom, if it is to come, must come today. It will have no meaning left in it, if today, you, who have the power to help, do not exercise it. If you can exercise it, what seems impossible today will, under the glow of freedom, become possible tomorrow. If India feels that freedom she will also command that freedom for China. The road for running to Russia's help will be opened. The Englishmen did not die in Malaya or on the soil of Burma. What shall enable us to retrieve this situation ? Where shall I go, and where shall I take the forty crores of India ? How is this vast mass of humanity to be aflame in the cause of world deliverance, unless and until it has touched and felt freedom ? Today they are apathetic and almost lifeless, for life has been crushed out of them. If lustre is to be put into their eyes, freedom has to come, not tomorrow, but today. I have, therefore, pledged the Congress, and the Congress has pledged that it will either 'do or die.'"

Though Bapuji was very tired that night, he retired to bed late. Early next morning he was arrested and we did not see him again till after his release. Gandhiji had never expected that the Government would be so foolish as to precipitate a conflict by launching on repression after his clear and unequivocal declaration in the A. I. C. C. that he would strain every nerve to avoid a struggle and open negotiations with the Government to that end. Neither he nor the Congress had therefore issued any instructions in regard to the launching of the struggle. Bapu had prepared

draft instructions to be issued in the event of a struggle, if the Congress Working Committee approved of them. A meeting of the Working Committee had accordingly been fixed for the 9th of August. But early in the morning, while most of the city was asleep, the Congress Working Committee was arrested at a swoop. Just before Bapu went out to meet the Police officers, who had come to arrest him, he left with Pyarelal a word for Satyagrahis to emphasize, for the last time, the non-violent character of the struggle which he had in mind.

"Let every non-violent soldier of freedom write out the slogan 'do or die' on a piece of paper or cloth and stick it on his clothes, so that in case he died in the course of offering Satyagraha, he might be distinguished by that sign from other elements who do not subscribe to non-violence."

The draft instructions which Bapu had prepared for the Working Committee's consideration were never issued to the nation. They were released to the Press, for their historical interest, after Bapu's release from the detention camp in 1944. They were as follows:

*Confidential*

**For Working Committee Members only:**

HARTAL AND TWENTY-FOUR HOURS' FAST

"On the day of the *hartal* no processions should be taken out, nor meetings held in the cities. All the people should observe a twenty-four hours' fast and offer prayers. If the owners of the shops approve of our Satyagraha struggle, they will all close their shops, but no one should be made to close his shop under coercion. In the villages, however, where there is no fear of violence or disturbance, meetings may be held and processions taken out and responsible Congressmen who believe in mass Civil Disobedience should explain the meaning of the contemplated Satyagraha struggle to the people. The object of our Satyagraha is to secure the withdrawal of British rule and the attainment of independence for the whole of India. After the withdrawal of British rule, the constitution of the future Government of the country will be settled by the joint deliberation of the whole nation, including all parties. That Government will belong not to the Congress nor to any particular group or party; but to the entire 35 crores of the people of India. All Congressmen should make it clear that it will not be

the rule of the Hindus or of any particular community. It should also be well explained that this Satyagraha is not directed against Englishmen but against British rule only, for we regard no one as our enemy. This should be brought home to villagers.

"Local Congress workers should send all reports about the *hartal* and other activities to their Provincial Congress Committee and the latter to the Central Congress office. In case, the leader in a particular place is arrested by the Government, another should be chosen in his place. Every Province should make necessary arrangements suited to its particular circumstances. In the last resort, every Congressman is his own leader and a servant of the whole nation. A final word: No one should think that those whose names are on the Congress register are the only Congressmen. Let every Indian, who desires the freedom for the whole of India and fully believes in the weapon of truth and non-violence for the purpose of this struggle, regard himself as a Congressman and act as such. If anybody has the spirit of communalism or harbours hatred or ill-will in his heart against any Indian or Englishman, he will best help the struggle by keeping aloof. Such an individual will hinder the cause by joining the struggle.

"Every Satyagrahi should understand before joining the struggle that he is to ceaselessly carry on the struggle till independence is achieved. He should vow that he will be free or die. Those employed in Government offices, Government factories, railways, post offices, etc., may not participate in the *hartal*, because our object is to make it clear that we will never tolerate Japanese, Nazi or Fascist invasion, nor British rule. Therefore we shall not for the present interfere in the above-mentioned Government departments. But an occasion may certainly arise when we shall ask all those people who are employed in Government offices to give up their positions and join the Satyagraha struggle. But all Congress members in the Central and Provincial Assemblies ought to vacate their seats and come out forthwith. In case, an attempt is made to fill their places with enemies of the country's freedom, or henchmen of British Government, local Congressmen should be put up to oppose their election. The same applies to the Congress members of the Municipalities and other public bodies. As conditions in different provinces are not the same, every Provincial Congress Committee shall make arrangements suited to its special circumstances.

"If any Government servant is called upon to perpetrate excesses or injustice it will be his clear duty to resign at once, giving the real reasons. Free Indian Government will be under no obligation to continue in its service all those Government functionaries who are at present serving the Empire on huge

salaries, nor will it be under an obligation to continue the large pensions which are being drawn at present.

"All students reading in institutions conducted or controlled by the Government should come out of these institutions. Those who are above sixteen years of age should join the Satyagraha. Those who so leave these institutions should do so with a clear understanding that they are not to return to them until independence is achieved. There should be no coercion whatsoever in this matter. Only those who of their own free will wish to do so, should come out. No good can come out of coercion.

"If excesses are committed in any place by the Government, people should offer resistance and endure the penalty. For instance, if villagers, labourers or house-holders are ordered to vacate their farms or homes they should flatly refuse to obey such orders. If an adequate compensation is offered or if they are suitably provided for by grant of land etc., elsewhere, they may vacate their farms or homes. Here there is no question of Civil Disobedience, but of simply refusing to submit to coercion or injustice. We do not want to hinder military activities, but neither shall we submit to arbitrary high-handedness.

"The salt tax causes great hardships to the poor. Therefore, wherever salt can be made, the poor people may certainly manufacture it for themselves and risk the penalty.

"Land tax is due only to a government which we recognize as our own. It is long since we have mentally ceased to recognize the existing government as such, but until now we have not gone to the length of refusing the payment of land tax because we felt that the country was not prepared to go so far. But time has now come when those, who have the courage, and are prepared to risk their all, should refuse to pay it. The Congress holds that the land belongs to those who work on it and to no one else. If they part with a share of the produce to anyone, it is for the furtherance of their own interests. There are various systems of collecting land revenue. Where the Zamindari system prevails the Zamindars pay the tax to the Government and the ryot to the Zamindar. In such cases, if the Zamindar makes common cause with the ryot, his portion of the revenue, which may be settled by mutual agreement, should be given to him. But if a Zamindar want to side with the Government, no tax should be paid to him. This will, in the immediate present, spell ruin to the ryot. Therefore, only those who are prepared to face utter ruin should refuse payment of land revenue.

"Besides these, there are several other items which could be taken up. Directions in regard to these will be issued when the occasion arises."

The same morning, i.e., on the 9th August, members of the Working Committee and the A.I.C.C. were also arrested.

As I have reported earlier, Gandhiji was taken to the Aga Khan Palace, and the Working Committee members to the Ahmednagar Fort, though it remained a secret for several days. Bombay observed a complete *hartal*, and a public meeting presided over by Shrimati Kasturba Gandhi was to be held that evening in Shivaji Park. But she, Pyarelal and Dr. Sushila Nayyar were also arrested during the day before they could join the meeting.

This was Gandhiji's 14th arrest; his previous ones were as under:

I. In South Africa—

1. January 10, 1908, Johannesburg. Two months' simple imprisonment. Released on January 30, 1908.
2. October 15, 1908, Volksrust and Pretoria. About two months in different jails.
3. November 6, 1913, Palmford. Arrested and released on bail.
4. November 8, 1913, Standerton. Arrested and released on bail.
5. November 9, 1913, Teakworth. Arrested and taken to Dundee for trial, where sentenced to 9 months' rigorous imprisonment.
6. November 17, 1913, Volksrust. Three months' rigorous imprisonment; in 2nd Clark Kapta Jail for a few days, transferred from Volksrust to Bloemfontein and released on December 18, 1913.

II. In India —

7. April 17, 1917, Motihari, Bihar. Served with a notice, but not arrested.
8. April 9, 1919, Palwal. Arrested at Kosi Station and escorted back to Bombay.
9. March 10, 1922, Sabarmati. Arrested at Sabarmati Ashram for sedition, sentenced on March 18, 1922, for six years, taken to Yeravda, Poona. Released on February 5, 1924.
10. March 4, 1929, Calcutta. Arrested for defying the order of the Police Commissioner. Fined Re 1 on March, 26.

11. May 5, 1930, Karadi. Arrested at Karadi, taken to Yeravda under Regulation XXV of 1827. Released on January 26, 1931.

12. January 4, 1932, Bombay. Arrested at Mani Bhavan under Regulation XXV, 1827 and taken to Yeravda. Released on May 8, 1933.

13. July 31, 1933, Poona. Arrested and detained. Released but put under restriction on August 4, 1933. Sentenced to one year. Released on August 23, 1933.

14. August 9, 1942, Bombay. Arrested in Birla House, Bombay, and detained in the Aga Khan Palace, Poona. Released on May 6, 1944 on account of illness.

I left Bombay for Delhi the same evening. I reached Mathura Station and found that Railway and Telegraph lines had been tampered with, and that traffic was closed between Delhi and Mathura. I reached Delhi, via Hathras, by another route, and got down at Gaziabad, from where I took a car. The Movement had already started, and great things had happened. The city looked to me like one besieged. Militia was standing at important points, and a curfew had been imposed. Some of the workers had already been arrested, and I was on the "wanted" list.

On the 15th August the shocking news of Mahadevbhai's death in the Aga Khan Palace was conveyed to the public by the Government. Mahadev had been keeping indifferent health for a long time, but nobody thought he would pass away so soon. Some of us thought that the Government had poisoned him. Nobody could quite understand how bereaved Gandhiji felt upon hearing of the death of this dearest of companions, who was more than a son to him, and who was his devotee in the true sense of the word. He was his right-hand man, and we expected great things from him. We considered him to be the only one, who fully understood Bapu and hence was a real follower. His loss was irreparable. If he were alive today, who knows what precious biographical material he would have been able to give us regarding the Mahatma? This valuable information now cannot ever see the light of day.

How could this greatest sacrifice on the part of his "son"—made in the final struggle for freedom of India go in vain? Exactly five years later, on the memorable date, our country became free!

I avoided being arrested for a few more days, but ultimately I was arrested at my brother's house on the 20th of August, and interned for an indefinite period. This time all facilities, which had previously been given to Satyagrahis, were withdrawn, and no correspondence and interviews were allowed, even with close family members during the early part of the Movement. We were completely cut off from the outside world, and were not even allowed to contact Gandhiji. This is why I received no news from him.

From Delhi we were transferred to the old Central Jail, Multan, where we were subjected to various sorts of hardships. The very first day, when we reached the jail gates, a controversy arose over our Gandhi caps, which the Jailer wanted us to remove. We refused and the authorities would not allow us to enter the jail gates unless they were removed. It took some hours to arrive at a solution. On former occasions, we had been allowed to use our own clothes and bedding, and so we insisted that unless we were allowed to enter with our Gandhi caps on, we would not take anything at all with us. So it was decided finally that we would be supplied with prisoner's uniform, which consisted of a shirt, a pair of shorts, Dhoti, or Payjama, and a pair of drawers. We left all our own personal articles at the gate, and put on jail clothes. Only then did we enter the jail.

Our group consisted of about 15 people, and Sardar Diwan Singh Meftoon, Editor of *Riyasat*, was one of the party. He was extremely fat. No uniform would fit him. He, therefore, took a Dhoti and wrapped it around himself. But as no shirt would properly fit him, he had to remain half naked. However, he tied a turban on his head. We declared him to be the Mahant of our party, with the rest of us as his followers. We were put in quarantine for three

days. There was a shady tree in that particular barrack. We all flocked together under it in great amusement. It was past noon by that time. Though we had been docked as A class prisoners, we were informed that there was no classification in Punjab jails, and we would, therefore, be considered as members of a classless society. According to the Schedule, six annas' worth of food was allowed. Tea was served first, but milk was lacking. It took one hour to bring the milk. Then came our food, which consisted of Chapatis, black Dal, carried in iron drums, and a vegetable. As I had vowed not to take salt, I asked our Supervisor to provide me with Chapatis and saltless vegetables. But he said he was unable to do so without getting the sanction of the Inspector General. So I had to live on just plain Chapatis for three days, when our quarantine period ended, and we were then allowed to join our other companions, who were living in separate barracks.

As we had left everything at the gates, including our shaving materials, we grew beards and looked somewhat fierce. At last, word was received from the then Premier, Sir Sikandar, that there had been some misunderstanding as he had not banned Gandhi caps. After ten days, we were able to shave and wear our own clothes.

It was the Malaria season, and Multan's heat is a byword. There was no proper arrangement for medical facilities. One day, we decided to withdraw all our patients from hospital, and when the patients were being transferred, a lathi charge was made. The treatment of the Deputy Jailer was very harsh.

After a few months I was taken to the Ambala Jail, together with a batch of 15 workers from Delhi. It was now February, 1943. Suddenly on the 10th, we received news that Bapuji had gone on a 21 days' fast. It stunned us. What could we do? We were all so helpless.

I tried my best to get transferred to the Aga Khan Palace, but permission was refused. I heard afterwards, that in the Aga Khan Palace also, an attempt was made to have me transferred there, but with no result. We passed

these 21 days in prayers, and deep concern over Gandhiji's health. Some of us took only one meal a day. On the 18th February, at night, we received news of Bapu's critical condition. We passed that entire night offering prayers for his survival.

At last, this Maha Yagna of Bapuji's came to a happy end on the 3rd March, when all internees from Delhi were transferred to the Ferozpur Jail. The restrictions were gradually relaxed, and we were allowed newspapers, and were permitted to write letters.

News was then received that Shrimati Kasturba was lying dangerously ill in the Aga Khan Palace, and that her condition was daily deteriorating. I immediately tried to get a transfer to the Aga Khan Palace so that I could help in caring for her, but my request was refused, and Prabhavatibahen was sent there instead. Later, on the 22nd February, the sad news of her death was conveyed to us. This was the second sacrifice Bapu had made during his incarceration in the fight for freedom.

Shrimati Kasturba was Bapu's companion for sixty-two years. She was married at the age of 13, when she began to live with Bapuji. She followed him in every Sadhana of his life. This time when she went to jail, she had a premonition that she would not return alive from there. She loved Mahadevbhai as her own son and was greatly shocked by his death. During Bapuji's fast, her anxiety knew no bounds. Who knew when her life companion might pass away. Her life was hanging by a thread. She always prayed to God, not to allow her to suffer separation from her husband. It may be for this reason that God took her into His keeping nearly five years before Bapu's departure from this earth.

Ba shall ever remain revered ( प्रातःस्मरणीय ). A woman of her purity and loyalty to her husband is extremely rare in these days. The smouldering fire of her burning pyre even dared not break her Sohag bangles. When her bones were collected the bangles were found intact.

After a few days news was received of the illness of Gandhiji. He had grown very weak due to malaria. Suddenly on the 6th May, 1944 the good news of his release was brought to us. One of our companions, who had gone to the jail office, came out running and shouting that Bapuji had been released. This filled all of us with gladness and we celebrated that joyful day with much eclat.

After his release, Gandhiji went to Juhu for a month, in order to recoup his health. From Juhu, he moved to Dr. Dinshah's clinic. This was the period when Gandhiji began to confer with Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, who succeeded Lord Linlithgow. The Gandhi-Jinnah talks lasted for 15 days, from the 12th to the 26th of September, but with no results.

Bapuji observed the 22nd of every month as Kasturba Day. On that date he would get up half an hour earlier so that the entire Gita could be recited, along with the daily prayers. As Bapuji was still very weak I was anxious about his health. From Juhu he went to Sevagram, where I addressed a letter to him on my 45th birthday, and got his letter, dated 16-3-'45, — the first to reach me after my imprisonment. It ran thus :

" Don't be anxious on my account ; discredit newspaper reports. I got your letter. Try to maintain good health. Khurshedbahen is with her sisters. Give my blessings to all your companions."

After spending almost three years in jail, I was transferred to the Delhi jail for my release, which came on the 14th of July, 1945. When I was a free man once again I was told that Bapuji had gone to Simla to see the Governor General, and was expected in Delhi on the 17th. Almost three years had elapsed since I last saw him at Wardha. He left Simla by a special train and I went to Nizamuddin station to receive him. It was 4 o'clock in the morning. Bapuji was asleep. I rushed in, touched his feet, and woke him, so that we could get off the train. He reached Birla

House at 4-30 a.m., and held prayers at 5-30 a.m. Satyavati-bahen, who was interned with us, had developed tuberculosis whilst in jail, and was therefore released on grounds of health. She was lying dangerously ill in the T. B. Hospital at Kingsway, where she was awaiting death. Bapuji went there to see her and then left for Wardha by the evening train. As he was extremely busy the whole day, I did not find an opportunity to have a talk with him.

After an interval of more than 3 years, the A. I. C. C. Session was held in Bombay on the 21st September, 1945. Bapuji went there to attend it, and stayed at Birla House, where I went to obtain his Darshan. I recalled the 9th of August, 1942, when he was arrested, and I had the last glimpse of Ba and Mahadevbhai. Now, both of them were no more. Bapu had become very weak and had fever that day. On the completion of the A. I. C. C. meeting he went to Dr. Dinshah's clinic at Poona, and asked me to see him there, which I did on the 29th of September. These were the days when Bapuji made his well-known and much-loved short post-prayer speeches. He had started this practice after being released from the Aga Khan Palace, and continued it right upto the 29th of January — one day prior to his assassination.

While in Poona I paid my respects to the graves of Pujya Ba and Mahadevbhai in the Aga Khan Palace, which has, since then, become a place of pilgrimage to ardent Indian patriots.

## XI

## BHANGI BUSTEE OR SWEEPERS' COLONY

With the advent of 1946, great changes were expected in the Indian political field. The Labour Party had come into power in Great Britain, and on March 15th the British Prime Minister Mr Attlee announced that the Cabinet Mission was going to visit India with the full intention of helping her to attain her freedom as speedily as possible and in the widest sense.

Gandhiji was now staying at Urulikanchan, and was busily engaged in his enterprise of Nature cure. Gandhiji was an ardent advocate of Nature cure throughout his life, and hardly took any medicine even in his early days. In South Africa, when he started an Ashram, he introduced Nature cure amongst the Ashramites, and wrote a book on the subject *. Upon his returning to India, he practised the same principles in his Ashram, and also carried out various experiments in dietetics. Since his release from the Aga Khan Palace, he paid special attention to this type of treatment, and wanted to make it available to the poor people as well as the rich, for he felt that the Nature cure clinics in India were rather costly, and thus were beyond the means of the average man. He undertook the starting of such a clinic at Urulikanchan, near Poona for the poor, in spite of his multifarious activities. He contemplated living there at least four months each year. In a letter to Sardar Patel he remarked, " What has been a hobby with me for the last fifty years has now become a passion." There, at Urulikanchan, he examined the patients himself and then treated them. Explaining the reason for his belief he said :

" The practice of Nature cure does not require high academic qualifications or much erudition. Simplicity is

* *Key to Health*, published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, price As. 10, postage etc. As. 4.

the essence of universality. Nothing that is meant for the benefit of the millions requires much erudition. The latter can be acquired only by the few and therefore, can benefit only the rich. But the true India lives in her seven lakhs of villages, obscure, tiny, out of the way hamlets, where the population in some cases hardly exceeds a few hundred; very often not even a few score. I would like to go and settle down in some such village. That is the real India, my India, for which I live. You cannot take to these humble people the paraphernalia of highly qualified doctors and hospital equipment. In simple natural remedies, and Ramanama lies their only hope. (*Harijan*, 7-4-'46, p. 69)

Expounding his Nature cure treatment he said:

"I am trying to develop a system of Nature cure suited to the millions of India's poor. I try to confine myself to the propagation of such cure as is derivable from the use of earth, water, light, air and the great void. This naturally leads man to know that the sovereign remedy of all ills is the reverent recitation of the name of God whom some millions here know by the name of Rama and the other millions by the name of Allah. Such a recitation from the heart carries with it the obligation to recognize, and follow, the laws which Nature has ordained for man. This train of reasoning leads one to the conclusion that the adage 'prevention is better than cure' is true. Therefore, one is irresistibly driven to inculcating the laws of hygiene, i.e., of cleanliness of mind, body, and its surroundings." (*Harijan*, 15-6-'47, p. 189). "Man's physical body is composed of five elements, i.e. air, water, earth, fire (or Tejas) and ether (space). The soul quickens it." (*Harijan*, 7-4-'46, p. 69)

"My Nature cure is designed solely for villagers and villages. Therefore, there is no place in it for microscope, X-rays and similar things. Nor is there room in Nature cure for medicines, such as quinine, emetin and penicillin. Personal hygiene and healthy living are of primary importance. And these should suffice. If everyone could achieve perfection in this art, there would be no disease. And, while

obeying all the laws of Nature in order to remain healthy, if illness then does come, the sovereign remedy ever lies in Ramanama. But this cure through Ramanama cannot become universal in the twinkling of an eye. To carry conviction to the patient, the physician has to be a living embodiment of the power of Ramanama. In the meantime, all that can possibly be had from the five elements of Nature must be taken and used. They are earth, water, ether, fire and air. This, to my mind, is the limit of Nature cure. Therefore, my experiment in Urulikanchan consists in teaching the villagers, how to live clean and healthy lives and in trying to cure the sick through the proper use of the five agents. If necessary, curative herbs that grow locally, may be used. Wholesome and balanced diet is, of course, an indispensable part of Nature cure." (*Harijan*, 11-8-'46, p. 260)

"The most essential of these five is air. Man can live without food for several weeks; without water for some days, but without air, he cannot live for more than a few minutes. God has, therefore, made air universally available. Shortages of food or water there may be at times, but of air, never.

"Man's body is the temple of God. Any one who taints the air that is to enter that temple desecrates it. He takes the name of Rama in vain." (*Harijan*, 7-4-'46, p. 69)

Gandhiji was asked as to how he managed to keep physically fit. To this he replied that outwardly he owed his physical fitness to strict adherence to regular habits in eating, drinking and sleeping, and to his partiality to Nature cure principles which he had strictly adopted since 1901, and made a part of his daily life. Reminiscing, he described how uptil 1901 he had used the medicine bottle, and then had thrown it away, and for the next forty-five years had lived, more or less, according to Nature cure principles.

"But in a still greater measure", emphasized Gandhiji, "it is due to the practice of detachment of mind. By detachment I mean that you must not worry whether the desired result follows your action or not, as long as your motive is

pure, and your means correct. Really, it means that things will come right in the end, if you take care of the means, and leave the rest to Him." He based his belief on the teachings of the Bhagavadgita which he had called his Dictionary of Action. (*Harijan*, 7-4-'46, p. 71)

So in the evening of his life, when he was zealously engrossed in this experiment to make the practice of Nature cure universal he was called upon to make a last bid to achieve his cherished goal, namely, Independence for India.

A call came from Delhi to meet the Cabinet Mission. By now, Gandhiji had decided that whenever he left Sevagram he would always stay at the Bhangi Colony of the particular place he happened to be visiting. I, therefore, wrote a letter to him enquiring whether he would stick to this rule when he came to Delhi, and whether I should make arrangements accordingly. He replied that he would prefer to do so.

The Bhangi quarters in Delhi are slums of the worst type, and are a standing slur on the fair name of India's Capital. Gandhiji had personally seen most of the slums himself during his many previous visits to this city, and had tried his best to get them improved, but with no appreciable results. Referring to such Harijan Bustees Gandhiji, replying to a question, once said :

" If I become a dictator for one day I would spend it in cleaning the stables of the Viceroy's house that the hovels of the Harijans in Delhi are. It is disgraceful that, under the very nose of the Viceroy, such poverty and squalor should exist as there is in the Harijan quarters. And why does the Viceroy need such a big house ? If I had my way, I would turn it into a Hospital." (*Harijan*, 23-6-'46, p. 199)

Although I had obtained Bapu's permission to arrange for his stay in Bhangi Bustee, the question before me was where to accommodate him. Nairji suggested the Bhangi Colony on Reading Road. We both visited the place. It was a Sunday. Hundreds of young men had collected there, and

were holding a meeting of some sort. I afterwards learnt that they were members of the Rashtriya Sevak Sangh, of which I had not heard before. I liked this place, as it was suitable in all respects for Bapu's stay. I met the Managing Committee members of the temple and got their permission, and then contacted Shri G. D. Birla, who undertook to make all the necessary arrangements for his stay, and the work immediately commenced.

Valmiki Mandir is adjacent to the Sweepers' Colony on Reading Road. The inhabitants of that colony are New Delhi Municipal Committee employees and they had built a temple and a Dharmashala for their guests ; also a room to be used as a school for their children by means of donations given by public-spirited citizens. It was here that elaborate arrangements were made for Bapuji and his party to stay. As accommodation was very limited, a few huts, tents, and Shamianas were put up as well. Volunteers from the Swayam Sevak Dal and the Delhi Cloth Mills were called upon to help with the arrangements, and they performed their duties most efficiently. The place gave an appearance of a camp. I took charge of its management, and thus found a means of being close to the Mahatma.

Gandhiji came to Delhi, by special train, from Bombay on the First of April. He got down at Nizamuddin Station from where he was taken to the camp. Some of the followers of the Ambedkar Party staged a demonstration against him. They paraded black flags, and threw pebbles at Bapu's entourage, but the volunteers promptly dispersed them.

The Cabinet Mission had already arrived in Delhi. Its members were Sir Pethick Lawrence, the then Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr A. V. Alexander. Meetings between the Viceroy, the Cabinet Mission members and Gandhiji began from the very first day of his arrival. In the evening, he held prayers in the compound of the camp, sitting on a raised platform facing a multitude of people. Thousands attended the prayer, and then were addressed by Gandhiji after its

completion. His first utterance was: "I have of late been saying that the Hindus have to become Atishudras, not merely in name but in thought, word and deed. For that token scavenging is not enough. I have, therefore, decided that I must go and actually live among Harijans in Harijan quarters." (*Harijan*, 14-4-'46, p. 77). He stressed perfect discipline, and taught them the art of reciting Ramadhun with clapping of hands to keep the rhythm. Sir Stafford Cripps attended the prayers on the first day.

Though prayers were held in the morning as well, Bapuji would not allow outsiders to join in them, as he did not like to be disturbed in the early hours. The attendance at prayers on the second day was so great that from the third day we had to change the place of meeting to Ramalila grounds, where Gandhiji drove in a car and sat on a raised platform. In those days, Bapu's post-prayer speeches were mainly on the efficacy of air, water and mud in Nature cure.

Bapuji took his morning stroll in the camp compound. Rashtriya Sevak Sangh had one of their branches in a room of the camp. Every day in the early morning hours, in the adjacent maidan — they held their parade and flag salutation. One day, Bapuji happened to notice these people, and asked me whether they were Congress volunteers. I told him that they belonged to R. S. S. and were living in one of the rooms of our camp. He then acquainted me with the past history of that organization, and told me that their Founder was a man of good intentions, but that after some time the organization had, unfortunately, began to work secretly and had changed its tactics. They even believed in violence now.

I was truly surprised to hear that Bapuji knew all the facts regarding the R. S. S. A few days later Shri Thatte, with some of his followers, came there and picketed the camp. He was removed by the police. A few more unexpected incidents took place; we did not attach much importance to them at the time. But when I recall those days

and incidents now I feel extremely sorry for not taking notice of them, and for remaining ignorant of their real significance.

During the first week, he attended the silent prayer of the Friends Society at the Y. M. C. A., where Sir Pethick Lawrence also joined him. This silent service continued for several Sundays. Those attending used to sit in perfect silence for a few minutes and then disperse. Bapuji also visited the I.N.A.* camp and interviewed the prisoners. The great trial of the I. N. A. had just been completed, and Shah Nawaz, Saigal and Dhilon were acquitted. During the third week he visited the Balikashram and Jamia Millia near Okhla and met the students. But the more important event of the week was the meeting between Malaviyaji and Gandhiji on the 18th at the former's residence at 5, Canning Road. Malaviyaji, being very old, could hardly speak; his voice was so feeble and faint that Bapuji heard his words only with much difficulty and effort.

In the last week of the month, he addressed the volunteers who were helping out in the camp and advised them "to serve the lowest of the low", who were his next-door neighbours. He also visited the Bhangi quarters, near the Ajmeri Gate, which were a byword for filth and uncleanliness.

As talks with the Cabinet Mission were still in progress, the camp hummed with life from morning till night. Bapuji went almost daily to the Viceregal Lodge to see the Viceroy and the members of the Mission, and sometimes they came to the camp to see Gandhiji. There was no end to the stream of visitors, for every one was anxious to have a word with Gandhiji. Journalists and photographers besieged us and would not let us alone. In the meanwhile, the situation was growing more tense daily. The entire camp felt elated one day; the next, they became downcast. Thus, was the whole of April spent in endless discussions. Delhi had now become very hot, so it was

* Indian National Army consisting of those who broke away from the British Indian Army, under the leadership of Subhas Bose.

decided that the talks should be continued in Simla. Bapuji left for Simla by a special train, on the first of May. I, together with a few others, accompanied him. Great changes were to be seen in the Mahatma ; he relied more and more on God, and desired to be left alone to do his work ; he accepted as little service as possible from others, and that too only when absolutely necessary. Though he wanted to proceed to Simla alone, he left it to his comrades to decide whether they would accompany him or not. Most of them naturally, decided to accompany him, and he did not relish it much. He wanted to depend upon Rama alone, and to live under His protection.

On the eve of his departure for Simla, Gandhiji once again visited Malaviyaji at his residence. It was the last meeting between these two great men who considered each other as brothers. Gandhiji always considered Malaviyaji as his elder brother.

On his way to Simla he told his companions that he had been advising everybody to rely upon God alone, but that he himself was not observing what he preached, for he had so many companions with him, which he did not like. He wanted to be left alone and unattached. He would like as far as possible, to do all his work himself. Continuing he said :

" When one is used to human aids it is not easy to tear oneself away from them, all of a sudden. I am very conservative in my attachments. I have spent half a day in searching for a small bit of pencil which had been with me for a long time. I could not reconcile myself to its loss. It is no easy job to detach myself from my surroundings, and send away a party of friends whom I have trained and seasoned for my work for years, but I must do so now.

" It remains to be seen how I come out of the test. So far, people around me have attended to every little thing for me. If anything went wrong they were responsible. From tomorrow, I shall have to do all that myself and have only myself to blame, if anything goes wrong. Withal I must feel at ease with myself. It will be a great thing if I survive that detachment, and feel the inner joy. It is a big

experiment in my life, and a necessary stage in my spiritual growth." (*Harijan*, 12-5-'46, p. 131)

Addressing me he said: "As you have come to improve your health, you can stay here." But all his other companions, including Pyarelal, returned to Delhi.

At Simla, Bapuji stayed at Chadwick, where the customary evening prayers were held in open grounds, and big crowds attended them. After prayers he used to deliver a speech. I was entrusted with the duty of looking after him, and arranging for his meals etc. One day, in the absence of Dr. Dinshah, he asked me to give him massage — an art in which I was inexperienced. Fortunately, however, Dr. Dinshah just came in time to save me from embarrassment. Sardar Patel, Badshah Khan, and Prof. Kripalani who was the Congress President, were also staying with him.

Only those who had lived with him could tell, what a staunch faith and affection the Khan Saheb had for Gandhiji. He would not take any step without first consulting Bapu and getting his advice. He was sincere and outspoken, and was dead against the idea of the two-nation theory, and the division of the country. He could not understand the necessity of having a plebiscite in N. W. F. Province, when the last elections there were definitely fought on the specific issue of not having Pakistan as a separate country. But he could not carry his colleagues with him on this point. He opened his heart to Bapu, and expressed his hopes and desires, which Gandhiji was able to appreciate and understand. His condition was pathetic, as all his colleagues had now deserted him. Bapu alone remained true to him. One day, Bapu arranged a meeting between him and Mr M. A. Jinnah. Khan Saheb was very much opposed to the idea, but was finally persuaded into it with great difficulty. At night, both of us would go for a walk, and then he would tell me how he felt about things. He said he could hardly sleep at night. If anybody suffered for his convictions, it was Khan Saheb. His suffering has not yet ended. He is still undergoing

imprisonment and hardship because he strongly feels that India should be one, undivided country, regardless of whether Pakhtoons have their separate independent identity or not. He got his first great shock when the country was actually divided, and who can tell the depth of his grief when the beloved Mahatma was assassinated? Recently, a friend of mine received a letter from him in which he mentioned me, and said how I must feel for Bapu.

Pandit Jawaharlal and Maulana Saheb were staying in separate bungalows, but they came to Bapu's residence daily to consult him on various matters. Every effort was made to reach a settlement with the Muslim League, but Mr Jinnah was adamant and would not give in on any point. At last, after staying there a fortnight, Bapu returned thoroughly disappointed, to Delhi.

While at Simla, I once put the following question to Bapuji: "You are making a tireless effort for the propagation of Hindustani. You do not like Indians to speak or write in any foreign tongue in preference to Hindustani. May I draw your attention to the attitude of the owners of the so-called Nationalist English newspapers towards their Indian language editions? May I ask how this kind of invidious discrimination on their part, helps to spread the national tongue? You have only to compare the scale of salaries paid to the staff working on the English Dailies with that of their Indian language editions, to see the glaring disparity between the two. The former get nearly ten times as much as the latter. The editor of an English Daily sometimes gets as much as Rs 2,000/- per month, but that of a Hindi Daily does not get even Rs 200/-. An English newspaper is provided with all facilities. It gets the news straight from the teleprinter and has only to set it to type, whereas its Hindi counterpart must get the news translated before it can be printed. Thus it has to put in double the labour, and yet receives neither encouragement nor appreciation. Why should they, who work on these newspapers, then pay attention to Indian

languages, when they find that English is in demand everywhere, while they starve inspite of their pains? Another thing to be noted is that the circulation of Indian languages newspapers is by no means less than that of English ones. But just as Indian Railways, derive the bulk of their revenue from the Third Class Passenger traffic, yet all the amenities are reserved for the First and Second Class Passengers, so also the owners of English newspapers mete out a step-motherly treatment to the readers of their Indian language editions."

On this, Bapuji once wrote in the *Harijan* as follows:

"The letter herewith published is from a fellow-worker in the cause. He knows what he is writing about. Nor are the facts referred to by him unknown to the Indian public. The question is how to break the spell that the English language exercises over us. It is an essential part of our struggle for Swaraj; else, we shall have to revise our definition of Swaraj. In slavery, the slave has to ape the manners and ways of the master, e.g. dress, language, etc. Gradually, he develops a liking for them to the exclusion of everything else. When British rule is lifted, and we are independent, this infatuation for the English language, will automatically go. In the meantime, let those, who have realized the harm that this infatuation has done to the country, make it a point to use Hindustani, or, at least, only their mother tongue.

"It is a fact that the editors of English newspapers earn ten times as much as the editors of the newspapers in the Indian languages. The remedy for it also lies in our hands. The market value of English will find its natural level, once the British Empire loses India, for the simple reason that India cannot afford to pay salaries on a lavish scale. India is a poor country, and as long as the lot of the poorest of the poor remains unameliorated we have no right to draw fat salaries. The fact, however, is that the final decision rests with the newspaper reading public whether to raise or lower the prestige and price of the Indian language newspapers. If they will but cease to regard English papers

as their gospel and will instead transfer their patronage to Indian language newspapers the proprietors will soon be compelled to take note of the change, and adjust their policies accordingly. Something like that is already taking place. There was a time when Indian language newspapers had a poor circulation compared to the English ones. Now however the scales are reversed. Indian language newspapers are increasing, both in number and circulation.

"But those who are running Indian newspapers in Indian languages also owe a duty in the matter, even like the newspaper reading public. The language of the newspapers in the Indian languages is often poor, and the writings appearing in them lack originality. Newspaper men alone can remove these defects." (*Harijan*, 26-5-'46, pp. 149-50)

The Cabinet Delegation published their recommendations on the May 16th, and as further talks were postponed for a few days, Bapuji was persuaded to go to Mussoorie for a change. He left on the May 27th by car, and stayed there at Birla House. Here too he held his usual evening prayers, and delivered post-prayer speeches. The prayers were held in a nearby maidan, which proved to be too small to hold big audiences. Moreover, the place was very far off for people to come to, and it got dark by the time prayers were over. So another place, Silverton, was selected for this purpose. Bapuji went there by car, and then walked back to his residence.

During his stay at Mussoorie, he took a keen interest in the betterment of the Harijans and poor hill folk. He deputed another worker and me to go and study their living conditions and make a report to him. Most of these people were rickshaw-pullers and coolies. We found their condition pitiable. They lived in old tumble-down hovels. Their earnings were so meagre that they could hardly make both ends meet. Their average life-span was short, as rickshaw-pulling had a very bad effect on the lungs and health of those following this tiresome occupation. Bapuji, referring to these people one day, said in his conversation

with the fashionable gentry of the place : " The poor slave for you. They draw your rickshaws. It hurts me, and it ought to hurt you too that a fellow human being should pull the rickshaw with a healthy and able-bodied person sitting in it." (*Harijan*, 9-6-'46, p. 170)

Mussoorie is an expensive health resort, where only moneyed people can afford to go. Bapuji, therefore, expressed a desire to have a Dharamshala or Musafirkhana built in this hill station, so that poor people and those of moderate means could go there and avail themselves of the benefits of the dry, bracing climate whenever they felt the need of a change. He called a meeting of the rich and influential people, who were residents of the place, and asked for donations for this purpose. Promises were made, and a committee was formed to collect funds and create a Trust for the proposed Dharamshala. Bapuji left Mussoorie on the June 8th, and the work which had begun with great enthusiasm remained unfinished, for lack of Gandhiji's driving force and energy.

While at Mussoorie, a friend of mine who was a member of the U. P. Assembly and took a keen interest in the rickshaw-pullers' problem, wrote a letter to Bapu on rich, embossed official Assembly stationery. This caught the Mahatma's eagle eye. He called me, and asked me how my friend came to use such costly writing material when he claimed to be a servant of the poor ? He sent word to my friend to see him on his return from evening prayers. When the gentleman saw him, he took him to task for using such costly paper, and wrote a note in the *Harijan* about it. He said :

" I have discovered honourable members of Assemblies using most expensive, official embossed notepaper even for private use. As far as I know, office stationery cannot be used for private purposes, such as writing to friends or relatives or for letters from members of Assemblies to Constituents on matters other than that of public business. As far as I know, this is the general rule all over the world.

"But for this poor country, my objection to such a practice goes even deeper. The stationery I refer to is too costly for us. Englishmen, belonging to one of the most expensive countries in the world, and who had to flourish on the awe they inspired in us, introduced opulent and massive buildings for offices and bungalows, requiring for their upkeep an army of servants and hangers-on. If we copy their habits and style of living, we shall be ruined, and shall carry the country along in this ruin. And what was tolerated in the case of the conquerors will not be tolerated in us, the local people. There is, too, a paper shortage. I am, therefore, of the opinion that all these expensive habits should be given up. Hand-made paper with ordinary printed letter heads in Nagari and Urdu script should be used. The embossed stationery already printed and in stock, can easily be cut up and put to better purpose, and should not be used up under cover of economy. Surely village products cannot be made to wait till the expensive and possibly foreign stuff is used up.

"Popular Governments should signalize their advent by adopting popular measures and inexpensive habits." (*Harijan*, 16-6-'46, p. 180)

One day he was a few minutes late for evening prayers ; this irritated him as he never liked being late. The prayers had already begun. Apologizing for the delay in appearing, he addressed the audience thus : "It should be the general rule that prayers are not delayed for anybody on earth. God's time never stops. From the very beginning, the wheel of His time has turned round ceaselessly. As a matter of fact, there is no beginning for Him or His time.

"God is not a person. No one can describe Him as no one has seen Him. He is the Law and the Law-giver combined into one. The authors of the Vedas, after the profoundest search, have described Him as Neti, Neti (not this, not this). He moves all, and yet no one can move Him. Not even a blade of grass moves without His will. For Him there is no beginning and no end.

"Everything that has a beginning must end. The sun, the moon, and the earth must all, one day, perish even

though it might be after an incalculable number of years. God alone is immortal, imperishable. How can mere man find words to describe Him? How then can any one possibly afford to miss the time of offering prayers to Him, whose watch never stops?" (*Harijan*, 16-6-'46, p. 183)

Reaching Delhi, Gandhiji once again busied himself with the Cabinet Mission talks which had been suspended for a few days. At last, after a week's deliberation, it was decided to form a Coalition Government, which the Cabinet Mission announced on June 16. The Viceroy sent fourteen invitations to various individuals to form his Cabinet.

Thus, after staying for almost 3 months in Delhi — an unusually long period for Bapu to be away from Sevagram — he left for Poona on the 28th of June. From Poona he left for Bombay on the 5th of July to attend the A. I. C. C. meeting, and stayed at the Bhangi Colony. I also went there. From Bombay, I accompanied him to Poona, and then to Panchgani. One day, he had a long talk with me and advised me either to settle in a village and undertake rural reconstruction work or, to live at Sevagram and help him in his manifold duties. As I had developed a pain in my neck, I had, unfortunately, to return to Delhi.

When Indian Independence was no longer a mere dream, but a fast approaching reality, questions were asked as to what exactly Gandhiji meant by Independence? Though he had replied this same question scores of times on previous occasions, still he was never tired of answering it over and over. To a similar question again put to him when at Panchgani Gandhiji replied, on the 21st of July, 1946, as follows:

"I do not know that I have not, from time to time, given my idea of Indian Independence. Since this question is, however, part of a series, it is better to answer it even at the risk of repetition.

"Independence for India should mean the Independence of the whole country, including what is called 'India of the States' and of the other foreign Powers, French and Portuguese, who are there, I presume, on British

sufferance. Independence must mean that the people of India are free, and not merely those who are today ruling over them. The rulers should depend on the will of those who are under their heels, and should be the instruments whereby the will of the people is justly carried out.

"Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a small republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be a complete unit, self-sustained and capable of managing its own affairs, even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual person who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours, or from the world. It will be a free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants, and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.

"This society must, naturally, be based on Truth and Non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God, meaning a self-existent, all-knowing living force which is inherent in every other force known to the world, and which depends on none, and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing living light.

"In this structure, composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. Instead, it will be an oceanic circle, whose centre will be the individual, always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

"Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within, and, in turn, will derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all very Utopian, and therefore not worth a single moment's thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own value for mankind to use as a guide. Let India live for this true and ideal picture, though perhaps never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can begin to have something approaching it. If there is ever to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which the last is equal to the first, or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last.

"In this picture every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestic tree, whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are deep down in the bowels of the earth. Even the mightiest wind cannot move it.

"In this concept of an ideal India there is no room for machines that displace human labour, and concentrate power in the hands of the few. Labour has its own unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. But I must confess that I have never sat down to think out what that machine could possibly be. I have thought of the Singer sewing machine. But even that is perfunctory. I do not need it to fill in my picture." (*Harijan*, 28-7-'46, p. 236)

Asked whether in Free India there would be complete religious freedom and whether religion would be separate from the State, Gandhiji said, "If I were a dictator, religion and State would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The State has nothing to do with it. The State would look after your secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern." (*Harijan*, 22-9-'46, p. 321)

## XII

## VISHADA AND VAIRAGYA

### (Dejection and Dispassion)

The Muslim League observed the 16th of August, 1946 as Direct Action day. The result was that from that day bloodshed, resulting from Hindu-Muslim riots, was a common feature throughout the country. Calcutta experienced the worst massacre on this fateful date, and the already strained relations between the two communities became even more bitter, causing an impasse.

Lord Wavell was the Governor General during this trying period. According to the Cabinet Mission plan, a National Government was to be formed at the Centre on the 2nd of September. The Congress had agreed to serve in it, but the Muslim League boycotted it.

Gandhiji visited Delhi again on the 26th of August and stayed at the Valmiki Mandir. From early morning of the 2nd September, great activity was observed in the camp. The rights for which the Congress had fought for over 60 years were, at last, near achievement. The country's tried, sincere, and hard-working leaders were going to handle the reins of the Government from that day onwards. In honour of the great occasion, the camp was decorated with tricolour flags. The leaders were to take the Oath of Office at eleven o'clock that morning. All of them were to come to Bapu to get his blessings before going to Government House for the Oath-taking ceremony. Shri Rajendra Prasad was the first to come. He was followed by Shri Sarat Chandra Bose, Shri Jagjivan Ram and Sardar V. J. Patel. On arrival, they were greeted by the camp sisters who applied the auspicious vermilion to their foreheads, garlanded them, and gave them sweets and fruit, which were also distributed amongst the members of the camp. Being Monday, Bapu's day of silence, he blessed them smiling, and wrote as a message the following lines on a piece of paper : " End the Salt Law ; do not forget

the Dandi March ; achieve unity ; remove untouchability, and make Khadi available to all." After Vande Mataram was sung they took leave of him. As Pandit Jawaharlal could not come in the morning, he came at night to receive Gandhiji's blessings.

Though most of Bapu's time was now given to the Government's affairs yet he was not neglectful about other matters needing his attention. He tried to improve the squalid conditions under which the sweepers in the adjoining colony lived, and also was not unmindful of Charkha spinning and the use of Khadi by a larger number of people. Kanu Gandhi and I were told to open a training class in carding and spinning. It was started on the 11th of September ; and for eleven days thereafter till the 21st, 156 male and female members joined the class, paying Re. 1/- each as entrance fee. The trainees came in two batches, one from 7 to 11 a.m., and the other from 2 to 5 p.m. Bapuji visited the class every morning and evening and made his suggestions for its improvement and progress. "The only way to clothe our nakedness and drive away hunger is for us to grow our own food and make our own cloth", said he, to his audience one day. In another message he observed : "Before a Charkha class in full swing, everything else appears dull and lifeless to me. For I behold my Rama dancing in every thread drawn. I find Swaraj in it. When I contemplate the strength of the yarn drawn by 40 crores of hands my heart is filled with an ecstasy of joy." (*Harijan*, 22-4-'46, p. 322)

Some members of the Delhi Municipal Committee and some local businessmen came to Gandhiji one day and complained that it was a Chief Commissioner's and Deputy Commissioner's Raj in Delhi. Gandhiji replying said :

"The remedy is in your own hands. You should go to the Municipality only for public utilities' service, with no personal axe to grind. I am afraid, you will not be able to stand that test. You have many sins of omission and commission to answer for. As elected representatives in the Municipality, you are responsible for the Harijan hovels,

and the dirt and squalor of Delhi. Businessmen and contractors exploit the poor. If communal strife occurs in Delhi, it is the citizens who are responsible. The day for Commissioners' Raj is indeed over. It must now be the People's Raj, but the people themselves must be alive to their responsibilities." (*Harijan*, 15-9-'46, p. 315)

According to the Hindu Calendar, his birthday fell on the 22nd of September. It was his first birthday after the Congress had assumed office. There was great exultation among the camp people who wanted to observe this happy day with due ceremony.

The spinning class was still in progress. Along with it, a small exhibition, and a mass spinning demonstration was also arranged. Bapuji and other Congress leaders were to participate in it. A full day's programme was chalked out. Shri Rajendra Prasad, the Food Minister, was to unfurl the Congress flag early in the morning. It was decided that after the flag salutation ceremony, dry and fresh fruit would be distributed to the volunteers and to the children residing in the sweepers' colony, for which arrangements had been completed. We never dreamt that such a tiny matter would assume such large proportions as the day wore on! Bapu was acquainted with the plans for the whole programme, but assuming that the distribution of fruit was an ordinary thing, it was not mentioned in the programme.

Charkha Dwadashi was to take place the next day. Gandhiji was having his usual morning walk. Somebody reported to him, that sweets would be distributed by Shri Rajendra Prasad after the flag salutation ceremony. To my knowledge, he had never felt such severe agony as he felt upon hearing this news. He called Krishnan Nair and me and gave us a piece of his mind. He said, "The whole country is suffering from shortage of food. People are in a pitiable condition and starvation is looking out of their eyes. They do not get enough food to eat, still, you are going to distribute sweets. Is this what you have learnt from me? A fire is burning inside me; and this incident will work like gunpowder. I shall have to think what course I should now take."

He paused for a moment, and then continued : "How can I live for 125 years, under such circumstances ? Probably, there is not, as yet, full detachment in my attitude. This is why I am feeling it so much. Otherwise, why should I be so disturbed by this incident ? You are serving neither the Harijans nor the volunteers. Harijans are not beggars that they should be satisfied with little sweets. This is not even non-violence. You have spoiled my whole day."

We lost all our enthusiasm from that very moment, and began to ponder over the blunder we had committed, and hung our heads in shame. We could not find a place to hide ourselves. How to ask his forgiveness was the question before us, because we had no courage even to talk to him. We had never thought for a moment that Bapu would take such a serious view. Though we avoided sweets, yet dry and fresh fruit were also edibles, and the country needed them. Of his objection we had never thought. What to do next, so that our error might be condoned ? We were afraid lest Bapu should go on a fast. He had changed his menu already. What would he do next ? At last I took courage, and wrote a letter of apology. To which he replied :

"Your letter is full of ignorance and emotion. Your error has proved the instrument of my awakening. I smelt a sense of luxury in my food. The change which I have made suits my taste, and is no penance. You should all pray that it may prove to agree with me. If I am unable to keep it up, I shall revert to my previous diet. I have not given up taking vegetables. What I am now taking are their juices. In the place of fruit, I have increased the quantity of jaggery. If I am obliged to take wheat, I shall do so. Your atonement is not to render any apology but to be awake and alert.

"Your atonement does not lie in the observance of a fast, or in bearing hardships in other ways. It is in removing your ignorance and in acting cautiously, without attachment, in place of being emotional. It is your duty. Do not, in the least, worry about me."

25-9-'46 Bapu's Blessings"

There was no occasion for any discussion or explanation. So we all kept quiet and silently watched to see what would happen next. His diary that night contained the following: "The true meaning of the spinning wheel seems to have been forgotten. I was angry. I have to consider what my duty is under the circumstances. It seems to be so very hard to maintain a detached frame of mind in the midst of this raging fire. My heart searching continues." (*Harijan*, 29-9-'46, p. 336)

"I am filled with agitation", he remarked to a comrade. "Why can I not suffer this anguish with unruffled calmness of spirit? I am afraid I have not the detachment required for living up to 125 years. That also explains why Charkha and Khadi are making such slow progress. Success of Khadi is impossible without infinite patience. A burning zeal coupled with absolute detachment is the key to all success." (*Harijan*, 29-9-'46, p. 336)

The next day he made the following remarks in his post-prayer speech:

"The music of the Charkha sweetly murmurs that we are all one, born to be equal sharers in the goods of the earth, with no one higher or wealthier than the other. Yet the world today is full of inequalities of wealth, and invidious distinctions of high and low. This is folly. In our arrogance we forget that we all, one day, will be levelled to dust by Death which knows no distinctions. The second lesson is, that we must earn our daily bread by the sweat of our brow, what a Russian savant has called "bread labour", and the third is, that if we are one of, and with the people, we should refuse to give food to those who are not in need, or to take more than we need for maintaining health. If we all observe these rules there would be no scarcity of food in this land, and we would refuse to look across the seas for food stuffs.

"Yet my closest comrades were about to make the mistake of serving refreshments after the flag salutation to volunteers and Harijans, who are not in need of such. Is it then not criminal to fritter away

food stuffs that would serve to keep alive twenty men, by providing titbits to Harijans and volunteers, who are certainly not suffering from pangs of hunger? We are deceiving ourselves if we think that thereby we are serving the Harijans. The real hunger of the Harijans which needs to be satisfied is not for morsels of food, but for a decent living as self-respecting and equal citizens, and for a square deal as human beings, for freedom from fear, inculcation of clean and sanitary habits, thrift, industry and education. This requires perseverance, self-sacrifice, and patient, intelligent labouring on our part. If you give me money to feed Harijans I would refuse to accept it. For I do not want to make beggars and idlers of them. Dr. Rajendra Prasad is our Food Member, who wants to save every morsel of food for the famishing, and the hungry. In the circumstances, it may be that the oversight of my comrades is due to my being lax with myself. Am I not allowing myself to partake, rather too freely, of the fruits that are being placed before me? The lesson of yesterday, is a grave warning for us all, if we are to learn truly the lesson of the Charkha." (*Harijan*, 29-9-'46, pp. 335-36)

To speak the truth, that hour was a very inauspicious one, for I observed the amount of spiritual agony Bapu suffered from that day onwards. Perhaps he never suffered so much in his whole life. From that day, he left off talking about his living upto 125 years, and he constantly referred to this incident, so much so, in fact, that when he went to see Lord Mountbatten, and I happened to arrive at Government House with his lunch, I heard him relating the same incident to the Governor General, and heard him mentioning my name in that connection as well. At this time, the country too witnessed such horrible acts of retaliation, cruelty, and starvation one after the other, that they increased his heart's agony. It is my firm conviction that if he had so desired, he could have lived up to 125 years, but he no longer had any interest left in his life now. The first shock he received was due to the Calcutta happenings, which were soon followed by similar occurrences in Noakhali, and then in Bihar. After that, the country was

divided into two parts, to which he was very much opposed, and he raised his voice, continuously for three days, in his post-prayer speeches, against the proposed division of India. He did not even join in the Independence Celebrations, which were observed on the attainment of freedom and for which he had fought for so many years. In intense cold weather, he toured Noakhali and other villages barefooted, and all alone, just as Dharmaraja proceeded towards heaven all alone. For him, this type of Independence was not worth anything, because on one side the country indulged in celebrations, the taking out of processions, holding of meetings, and illuminations of houses and public buildings, while on the other side, rivers of blood were flowing in the Punjab, and loot and butchering were at their peak. Mothers, sisters, and daughters were undergoing the sufferings of hell. Bapu listened to everything and observed all that went on. These incidents broke his heart. His eyes were dry, for whom would he weep ? All were his kith and kin. Outwardly, he seemed calm and peaceful, but a fire raged within his heart, consuming him every moment. He found his life's companion — non-violence — by means of which he had attained the freedom of the country was going a-begging, and being insulted in every nook and corner of the country. The ladder by which the people had achieved their final goal had been thrown away. He uttered these words now and again, "I do not want to live any longer if I have to witness this degradation." The desire to "do or die" had taken firm root in his heart. Nobody had the capaciy to understand his Vedana (anguish). He laughed and joked, but a smouldering fire was burning within him all the time. Only a wounded soul could understand the agony of another wounded soul, but there was none else more wounded in spirit than the Mahatma. Who could fathom the depths of his suffering ? He alone, or his Rama, whose name he would sometimes utter with deep emotion, could truly understand the depth of his sorrow.

When I gave him various important items of news and said that only he could rectify the mistake, he replied in pathetic tones, "Who cares for me ? " His great pain was

hidden in these sad words. I had seen the days when a word from his mouth was implicitly adhered to and nobody dared to disobey. Now, from the very mouth of the "Father of the Nation' did these words escape, "What can I do?" He used to cite Bhagawan Vyas of Mahabharata fame: "Raising my hands I warn people, again and again, but my advice has become like that of a man crying in the wilderness; nobody pays any attention to it."

Whether anybody listened to him or not, Bapuji never wavered from his path of truth, and he never refrained from saying what he considered reasonable and just. He was a seer as well as a prophet. It seemed as if coming events automatically cast their shadow before him in advance. He strongly opposed the division of the country. He did not succeed, but what was the result? Division was accepted in order to avoid continuous bloodshed, yet nothing availed, for streams of blood kept flowing. In general, Bapu first decided on a course of action, and afterwards reasoned it out. His colleagues had observed, not once, but several times, that what he had said, had turned out to be true. The great poet Bhavabhooti had said, "To describe a thing, just as it had happened, is the definition of truth for the common people, but whatever the seers say is considered to be the truth."

Bapu's birthday fell on the 2nd of October according to the English calendar. We all had been so perturbed by the incidents that had occurred on Charkha Dwadashi, that we avoided trying anything new in the way of celebrating that date. Visitors came to offer him flowers, and after greeting him, went away. Bapu never approved of plucking flowers. He was of the opinion that flowers are seen at their best unplucked. He was very much against the idea of being garlanded, or, of having flowers offered to him; still, he did not mind these things if done only now and again.

At the close of the month, Gandhiji attended a meeting of the Secretaries and Presidents of the Provincial Congress Committees, at the D. A. V. School, New Delhi, when he replied to the following questions:

*Q.* "Wrangling and corrupt practices have today become a common feature of our elections. What should be the attitude of Congressmen with regard to the elections?"

*A.* "What you say only shows that we seek leadership instead of being servants of the nation. There can be no room for wrangles, when service is the ideal. Congressmen should realize that only a few can become leaders; the goal for all Congressmen to set before themselves must be to qualify as true servants of the nation. An institution that suffers from a plethora of leaders is surely in a bad way. For instance, if every Khudai Khidmatgar aspired to become the Chief, it would make the life of Badshah Khan hell, besides disrupting the Khudai Khidmatgar organization itself.

"If Congressmen lived upto the creed which they professed, viz. the attainment of Swaraj through truthful and non-violent means paraphrased in the Congress constitution by the words 'peaceful and legitimate', there should be no wrangling and no corruption. The existence of election wrangles, and irregular practices is thus only a proof that the Congress policy of attainment of Swaraj through peaceful and legitimate means is honoured more in the breach than in the observance. I have, therefore, suggested that it should be dropped in the amended Constitution that is to come into being. Pending the setting up of the new Constitution I have suggested a plan of work which does away with further elections for the time being, and which requires all Congressmen to be active servants. If it is adopted it should cut across all our difficulties and troubles."

*Q.* "Very few minorities' representatives have been returned at the elections. What remedy do you suggest?"

*A.* "Minorities being a minority, their representation in the Congress organization will, naturally, be proportionately less. If they feel dissatisfied, they can keep out of the Congress without ceasing to be Congressmen as I have done. It is my claim that I am not less of a Congressman,

but more, by reason of my ceasing to be even a four-anna member of the Congress. At the Faizpur Congress the question was raised by Mrs. Anasuyabai Kale at a gathering at which I was present. On interrogation it was found that the number of those who were four-anna members was very small. But, in reply to the question as to how many in the gathering were not four-anna members, a forest of hands went up. These are the real Congressmen seeking no reward but seeking ever to serve it. Bereft of them it would dwindle into a parlour show. The only worthy aim of a Congressman can be to belong wholly to the Congress, never to capture and dominate the Congress. If everybody took up the correct attitude there would be no minorities and majorities. To try to capture the Congress would be to kill the Congress. And a Congressman who is worthy of his salt would die rather than be guilty of the murder."

*Q.* "The growth of various party groups in the Congress is having a very adverse effect on the Congress organization. What is the remedy ?"

*A.* "There can be only one party in the Congress, i.e. that of Congressmen, and no other. This is not to say that there is no room in the Congress for individuals or groups holding different opinions. I do not believe in dead uniformity. 'All men are born equal and free' is not Nature's law in the literal sense. All men are not born equal in intellect, for instance, but the doctrine of equality will be vindicated, if those who have superior intellect will use it, not for self-advancement at the expense of others, but for the service of those who are less favoured in that respect than they. Today there are all sorts of people in the Congress. That is why I have suggested the removal of the words 'peaceful and legitimate' from the Congress objective. That need not mean abandonment of Truth and Non-violence by Congressmen. The object is only to purge out hypocrisy. It jars. Let those who believe in the doctrine of the sword openly avow it. To take the name of non-violence, when there is sword in your heart, is not only hypocritical and dishonest, but also cowardly. Our

non-violence vis-a-vis the British Government has been the non-violence of the weak. Otherwise, why should there be all these wrangles among ourselves? We try to justify the disorganization and chaos in our midst by pointing to the example of Squatters in England, forgetting that blind imitation will not help us. There is nothing more demoralizing than the fake non-violence of the weak and the impotent. If we had the requisite non-violence in us, our public life would be characterized by utmost toleration. There would then be room for as many parties as there are opinions. In such a case, differences of opinion would be an indication of healthy independence of mind which is the law of life, not party intrigues and party strife. The latter are incompatible with independence."

*Q.* "How should the Hindu-Muslim question be tackled?"

*A.* "I must own defeat on that point. I know that mine is today a voice in the wilderness, and yet I claim that mine is the only practicable solution. I can never subscribe to the view that because certain members of a particular community have indulged in inhuman acts, the whole community should be, therefore, condemned outright, and put beyond the pale. The Muslim League may call Hindus names and declare India to be Dar-ul-Harb, where the Law of Jehad operates, and may even call all Muslims, who co-operate with the Congress, Quislings fit only to be exterminated. But we must not cease to aspire, in spite of this wild talk, to befriend all Mussalmans and hold them fast as prisoners of our love. It would be desirable if Hindus, in their lakhs, offered themselves to be cut to pieces without retaliation or anger in their hearts. Non-violence is today rightly laughed out of court as Utopian. Nevertheless, I maintain that it is the only way to keep Hinduism alive, and India undivided. The history of the non-violent methods followed by Congress during the last twenty-five years has taught us nothing, if it has not taught us that."

*Q.* "How can we counteract the activities of the Communists who are openly opposing the Congress?"

*A.* "The principle which I have laid down regarding the Hindu-Muslim question also holds good in respect of the Communists. By Muslim I mean the Muslim League. For, not all the Muslims are Muslim Leaguers. The Muslim Leaguers have today stated in slogan form that ten crores of Indian Muslims are in danger of being submerged and swept out of existence, unless they constitute themselves into a separate State. I call that slogan scare-mongering, pure and simple. It is nonsense to say that any people can permanently crush, or swamp out of existence, one-fourth of its total population, which constitute the Mussalmans in India. But I would have no hesitation in conceding the demand of Pakistan, if I could be convinced of its rightness, or that it would be good for Islam. But I am firmly convinced that the Pakistan demand, as put forth by the Muslim League, is un-Islamic, and I have not hesitated to call it sinful. Islam stands for the unity and brotherhood of mankind, not for disrupting the oneness of the human family. Therefore, those who want to divide India into possibly warring groups are enemies alike of India and Islam. They may cut me to pieces, but they cannot make me subscribe to something which I consider to be wrong.

"The question of the Communists stands on a slightly different footing. They seem to have made trouble-shooting their profession. I have friends among them. Some of them are like sons to me. But it seems they do not make any distinction between fair and foul, truth and falsehood. They deny the charge. But their reported acts seem to sustain it. Moreover, they seem to take their instructions from Russia, whom they regard as their spiritual home rather than India. I cannot countenance this dependence on an outside power. I have gone so far as to say that we should not depend even on Russian wheat in our present food crisis. We must have the ability and courage to subsist on what our soil can give us, rather than depend upon foreign charity. Otherwise, we shall not deserve to exist as an independent country. The same applies to foreign ideologies. I would accept them only to the extent that I

can assimilate them and adapt them to the Indian scene. But I must refuse to go under them.

"My formula for the Communists, therefore, is that I would prefer death at their hands, rather than retaliate." (*Harijan*, 6-10-'46 pp. 337-39)

Another spinning class was opened on the 30th of September for a week. It was intended not to take more than 30 students, yet 38 joined the class. Gandhiji said in a message: "If all work were to be carried out on this basis, and in this spirit, God would surely reward our labours." Seeing the enthusiasm of the people, a third spinning class was opened for another week from 13th to 19th October. 50 trainees attended the class, including two foreign correspondents — Mr Norman Cliff and Mr Andrew Freeman. Both of them learnt to sit on the ground and worked at their carding instruments and wheels.

As long as Bapu stayed in Delhi, leaders of various groups used to come to him, almost daily, to get his advice on diverse matters. The Working Committee meetings were also being held quite frequently. A meeting of the A. I. C. C. was held during this period as well. So Bapu was kept extremely busy.

The talks regarding the Muslim League joining the Centre were still going on. At last, they joined the Centre on the 25th of October. Gandhiji was becoming impatient to proceed to Bengal and Noakhali, owing to the disturbed conditions prevailing there. One day, a crowd of excited youths came to the prayer grounds shouting slogans demanding redress for E. Bengal. He assured them that the heart of every man and woman who believed in God was bleeding for Bengal and the thing foremost in his mind in those days was the Hindu-Muslim question. After staying in Delhi for about two months, he finally left for Calcutta on the 28th of October, to proceed to Noakhali. He remarked, "I do not know what I shall be able to do there, but all I know is that I won't be at peace with myself until I go there." I sought his permission to accompany

him to Noakhali, to which he replied, "I think your coming to Bengal with me at this juncture is quite useless. You are not fit enough to take all the risks involved. Otherwise, too there is much to do here. I do not know what will happen there." Valmiki Mandir, 28-10-'46

A few days after Bapu's departure from Delhi a communal riot broke out in Bihar, which was followed by one in Delhi, and another in Gurmukhteshwar ; the whole country was affected by these constant strifes. The Mahatma undertook a fast on the 16th of November, hoping to restore peace in Bihar. He gave up fasting only when peace was once again restored there. Rather hesitatingly, I asked his permission to join him at Noakhali, but he replied on 12-11-'46 : "I see no real use in my calling you here. You won't be able to live with me. I am arranging to send all my companions to different centres. Therefore, your duty lies in sticking to Delhi, and in doing whatever little service you can render there. But your first concern should be to improve your health." From Noakhali, from the 20th November onwards, Bapuji sent his companions to different places to work for the cause of unity, and himself toured, barefooted, the affected areas. His tour lasted till the 2nd of March, when he was urgently called to Bihar and was obliged to go there, leaving his work still unfinished in Noakhali. He reached Patna on the 5th of March. In those days, I regularly sent him reports of what was happening in my part of the country, especially in Delhi and the Punjab. Several of his important letters in reply, were lost in transit. In one of his letters he wrote, "I have your long letter. You have done well in giving a detailed account. I am not yet fully aware of what is happening in the Punjab. Whatever I am doing I think is the best under the circumstances. My endeavour is to make from both communities men out of beasts which they have become. Success lies in God's hands. We have to do our duty. I have no time to write more. How is it that you have not written a word about your treatment ? I have not received your previous letter." Noakhali, 13-3-'47

From Noakhali Bapuji proceeded to Bihar, from where he was asked, by Jawaharlalji, to visit Delhi to attend the Inter-Asian Relations Conference. First, he declined, but when Lord Mountbatten who had succeeded Lord Wavell invited him to meet him, he could not refuse.

He reached Delhi on the 31st of March 1947, getting down at Shahdara. He stayed at Valmiki Mandir as was his frequent custom. He met the Viceroy on the 1st of April. Both of them became great friends even from their first meeting. They held talks continuously for several days, on different topics including the Hindu religion, and Gandhiji presented him with copies of Isha Upanishad and *The Song Celestial*.

He attended the Inter-Asian Relations Conference twice during his stay in Delhi. On the first day, he did not deliver a speech, but, instead answered some questions. The delegate from Azerbijan asked him whether he believed in the theory of One World, and whether it would be a success under the present conditions ?

He replied, " I would not like to live in this world if it is not to be one. Certainly, I should like to see this dream realized in my lifetime." (*Harijan*, 20-4-'47, p. 113)

Addressing the session the next day on the 2nd of April in the Purana Qila he said, " In this age of democracy, in this age of awakening of the poorest of the poor, you can redeliver this message with the greatest emphasis. You will complete the conquest of the West, not through vengeance, because you have been exploited, but through real understanding.

" The West is today pining for wisdom. It is in despair at having to multiply atom bombs, and having to use them, because atom bombs mean utter destruction not merely of the West, but also of the whole world. The prophesy in the Bible seems likely to be fulfilled and the end of the world will surely come if we go on as we are doing. It is up to you, therefore, to tell the world of its wickedness and sin which is the heritage your teachers,

and my teachers, have taught Asia." (*Harijan*, 20-4-'47, p. 117)

From the 1st to the 3rd of April Gandhiji could not hold his evening prayers at the Bhangi Colony, because a few amongst the audience took exception to the recitation of portions from the Koran in the course of the prayers. Giving his reasons for not holding the prayers during those three consecutive days he said that if there had been only non-objectors in the audience he would have willingly held the prayers and hoped he had sufficient courage to die at objectors' hands if they so desired with the name of Rama and Rahim on his lips. But he wished to avoid a clash between objectors and non-objectors and therefore gave up conducting the prayers. After three days the objectors withdrew, and from the fourth day full prayers were held as usual.

Gandhiji, in one of his post-prayer speeches, pointing to the objectors said :

"The Vedas have come down from time immemorial. So have the Upanishads. But they are imperfectly known. Any impurities that have crept into any of the Scriptures are due to the fact that they were added many years later.

"The Hindu religion is a great religion, and has infinite toleration and power of absorption. God is everywhere. He is the ruler of men's hearts. He only wants single-minded worship in whatsoever form it be and in whatsoever language. It is, therefore, wholly un-Hindu and irreligious to object to the great verse from the Koran Sharif being recited." (*Harijan*, 20-4-'47, p. 119)

From the 6th to the 13th April National Week was celebrated. On the first day, Gandhiji fasted for 24 hours. There was sacrificial spinning from 3 to 4 p.m., in which the Congress President and other Congress leaders took part. This continued throughout the week. Gandhiji's message was : "Take to spinning. The yarn we spin is capable of mending the broken warp and woof of our life. The Charkha is the symbol of non-violence on which all life, if it is to be real life, must be based."

He left for Bihar on the 12th of April. On the 15th of April Bapuji and Shri M. A. Jinnah issued a joint statement which ran as follows :

" We deeply deplore the recent acts of lawlessness and violence that have brought the utmost disgrace on the fair name of India, and the greatest misery to innocent people, irrespective of who were the aggressors and who were the victims.

" We denounce for all time the use of force to achieve political ends, and we call on all the communities of India to whatever persuasion they may belong, not only to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder, but also to avoid, both in speech and writing any incitement to such acts." (*Harijan*, 27-4-'47, p. 121)

In one of my letters, I suggested that he should meet the Socialists. In reply he wrote : " I have your two letters. My coming there is not certain. Don't rely on newspaper reports. If I call the Socialists a controversy will arise in the country. It is better if Jayprakash meets me when necessary. Everything is going wrong. How and when matters will improve, it is difficult to say. You should rest assured what is destined is sure to happen."

After an absence of about three weeks, Bapuji had to return to Delhi, on the first of May, to attend the Working Committee meeting. On this occasion also certain people, and especially the members of the R. S. S., objected to the recitation of some verses from the Koran during prayers, and he again had to give up conducting evening prayers. He felt sorry that because of the folly of a few individuals thousands of persons had to go away disappointed. But it was against his spirit of Ahimsa to force even one single person into submission. He asked his audience to close their eyes and join him in silent prayers for two minutes. On the 2nd May, Shri L. G. Thatte, General Secretary of the anti-Pakistan front was arrested outside Valmiki Mandir. The police began to arrest the objectors from that day onwards.

On the 4th of May he met Mr Jinnah, and even held discussions with the Socialists. Replying to a French friend, Gandhiji said :

"I feel that a Socialist State is bound to come into being in India. I hope that Indian Socialism will not be an arm-chair type of Socialism, but a practical sort. The goal must be clear-cut and perfect in conception, or else we shall be sailing on an unchartered sea and might founder. I myself naturally cling to the hope that future society in India will be built on non-violence, and only in such a case would Socialism become the permanent way of life."

"Will religion die?" was the next question. "If religion dies, then India dies" was the reply. "Today the Hindus and the Muslims are clinging to the bare husk of religion. They have gone mad. But I hope that all this is froth, that all the scum has come to the surface, as happens when the waters of two rivers meet. Everything appears muddy on top, but underneath it is crystal clear and calm. The scum goes to the sea of itself and the rivers mingle and flow clear and pure." (*Harijan*, 18-5-'47, p. 153)

He left for Calcutta on the 8th of May, and from there he proceeded to Bihar. I was so perturbed by the happenings everyday that I wrote to him my feelings in somewhat strong language, to which he replied on 18-5-'47 from Patna : "I have your letter full of anger. Don't you see the Hindus and Muslims have lost their manliness? Don't forget Bihar. There are other sad examples also. But I don't want to enter into a discussion. God will give us all good sense."

## XIII

# DIVISION OF INDIA, AND ITS EFFECT ON GANDHIJI

Gandhiji once again visited Delhi on May 25, 1947 at the request of Pandit Jawaharlal and Sardar Patel. As usual, he got off at Shahdara, a wayside station, three miles from Delhi Central, had his morning walk, and then went to Valmiki Mandir, where he decided to stay.

In those days, his staff had dwindled considerably as he had left most of his colleagues behind, posted at various riot places, such as Noakhali, and Bihar. This time only Manu Gandhi and Sushila Pai accompanied him. The happenings in the country deeply affected him, and he had become reckless with regard to his health and life. As I have already mentioned in the previous chapter, he had now no desire left to live up to 125 years. In one of his conversations he said :

" In the India as I see it shaping today, there is no place for me. I have given up the hope of living up to 125 years. I might last a year or two. That is a different matter. But I have no wish to live if India is to be submerged in a deluge of violence, as it is threatening to do. There is communal frenzy, and they are talking of militarization and industrialization. India might become a first-class military power and a highly industrialized country. But then where is the place for village industries or Khadi — in such an India ? " (*Harijan*, 8-6-'47, p. 177)

In one of his letters, he wrote, " I am in the midst of flames. Is it the kindness of God, or His irony, that the flames do not consume me ? " (*Harijan*, 8-6-'47, p. 177)

On his previous visits, Gandhiji had several times, to suspend his evening prayers owing to objection being taken by a few persons to the recitation of a verse from the Koran. On this occasion, a lady sent a letter of protest to the Koranic recitation, but Gandhiji did not stop the prayers,

as was expected. He argued that he was the guest of the Bhangis and was staying in their temple. As the owners of the Mandir had no objection to this recitation, he would not pay any attention to other objectors, and decided to continue the prayers, irrespective of feelings in regard to the method in which they were conducted.

On the 29th of May during one of his morning walks when both of us were alone, I said to him : " I observe that you are following your adopted line. You have declared that you will not yield an inch to Pakistan, out of fear, or by sword, though they could take the whole of India by persuasion and conviction. But I find that there is a difference of opinion between you, the Working Committee, and the Interim Government. They are yielding to Pakistan under the fear of the sword. You have guided the country and brought it to this stage ; you have fought its battles and given it the ' Quit India ' slogan ; but when the fate of the country is going to be finally decided and the ultimate decision taken, I find that you are not in the picture. I also find that not one tenth of the ideals, which were put before the Constituent Assembly, find a place in the discussions which are being held." He replied : " Nobody listens to me now." Then I said, " But, Bapuji, people are behind you." To this he answered : " This is not true, because the people of Gujarat (Punjab) are asking me to retire to the Himalayas. Those who considered me their leader, and who would worship my picture, no more follow me." To this I said, " They may not listen to you today, but they will have to listen to you within a few years." He then sadly answered. " Who knows whether I shall be alive or not at that time ? I feel that I have not many years left on this earth now."

Babu Rajendra Prasad joined Bapuji, almost daily, during the morning walks, and had interesting talks with him on the subject of how to decontrol food. Bapuji at this time stayed in Valmiki Mandir and he used to have his morning walks in the compound of the Christian Girls' School nearby. Bapuji was very much against all the controls

imposed by the Government. He considered the controls harmful for the country. He believed that there was no shortage of food, and that most of the difficulties suffered by the people were due to the controls. And what arguments he had with Babu Rajendra Prasad to convince him of the futility of controls, only those who heard them can bear testimony. Gandhiji did not leave the Ministers in peace, till the Cabinet lifted the controls. In private discussions, as well as during his post-prayer speeches, he stressed the need of abolishing them. The Government, which gave more weight to the opinion of their experts than to the people, was afraid that decontrol might lead to further deterioration in the food situation. But in the end they had to yield, change their policy, and lift the controls. People felt immensely grateful to Bapuji.

Sugar was the first commodity to be decontrolled. There was an immediate fall in the prices. Gur and sugar were easily available. The Mahatma was overjoyed. Then food stuffs were decontrolled, prices at once came down, and they could be bought without difficulty. In the end, cloth was also decontrolled.

But Bapuji was not yet satisfied. He wanted the people to get everything at a reasonable price and without any difficulty. According to him, transport was the greatest bottleneck, as it took a very long time for the railways to carry the goods from one place to another. Later, he began to insist on decontrolling petrol, and, in his last days, he repeatedly stressed this point, but he did not succeed during his lifetime.

The All India Radio now began to record his post-prayer speeches. This feature was started on the 31st of May, and was continued till the 29th January, 1948, a day prior to his assassination.

It was strongly rumoured that on the third of June, following the Viceroy's statement, there would be country-wide riots. The people were panicky and everybody shuddered to think about the approaching catastrophe. To this Gandhiji said :

"There is no cause for any fear. Everybody must die one day. Learn to die. We will not yield an inch to Pakistan through fear, though we may concede everything, if they could only convince us that they are right. You should be of one mind, and ponder over all these matters very patiently. Why should we look to the Viceroy for any suggestions he might bring? Why should that be a cause to make the Hindus and the Muslims panicky? There have been rumours of a similar nature on previous occasions as well, but nothing untoward happened. I hope the present fear will also prove baseless." (*Harijan*, 8-6-'47, p. 179)

The Viceroy returned from London with the fateful British Government's Announcement, which was made public on the evening of the 3rd of June. As a last resort, Lord Mountbatten, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr Jinnah agreed to vivisect the country into two parts. Pakistan was thus established, and the country was to get its freedom from the British yoke on August 15, 1947, instead of on June 30, 1948.

Speaking on the plan embodied in H. M. G.'s Announcement Gandhiji said that he had already told them, over and over again, that to yield even an inch to force was wholly wrong. The Working Committee maintained that they had not yielded to the power of arms, but they had to yield to the force of circumstances. The vast majority of Congressmen did not want to be unwilling partners. Their motto was non-violence, and, therefore, no coercion. Hence, after careful weighing of the pros and cons of the vital issues at stake, they had reluctantly agreed to the secession from the Union that was being framed, of those parts which had boycotted the Constituent Assembly. Gandhiji expressed sorrow at what he considered was a mistaken policy of the Muslim League. They feared Hindu domination, they said, and desired to rule in what they are mistakenly calling their own homeland. As a matter of fact, however, India was the homeland of all who were born and bred in India. Would the Muslims live in their homeland in isolation? Was not the Punjab as much the homeland of Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jews and Parsis who were of the Punjab?

Gandhiji could not blame the Viceroy for what had happened. It was the act of the Congress and the League. He (the Viceroy) had openly said that he wanted a United India, but that he was powerless in face of Congress acceptance, however reluctantly, of the Muslim demand. (*Harijan*, 15-6-'47, pp. 193-94)

He had done his best to get the people to stand by the Cabinet Mission statement of May 16 but had failed. But what was his duty and theirs in the face of the accepted fact? He was a servant of the Congress because he was a servant of the country and he could never be disloyal to them. Panditji and the Viceroy had said that nothing had been imposed on anyone. The agreement that was embodied in the Announcement being a voluntary act of the parties could be varied by them at any stage by mutual consent. He hoped that it was a final agreement between the parties. Therefore all violence should stop. (*Harijan*, 15-6-'47, p. 194)

Some people asked him whether he would undertake a fast unto death, in view of the decisions of the Congress Working Committee accepting the division of India. Had not he called Pakistan a sin in which he could never participate? Replying to this Gandhiji said that he could not fast at the dictation of anyone. Such fasts could not be lightly undertaken. They could, conceivably, be wholly undesirable. They could not be undertaken out of anger. Anger was a short-lived madness. He would, therefore, undertake a fast only when the still voice within him called for it. He was a servant of the country, and, therefore, of the Congress. Was he to fast because the Congress differed from his views? He had to be patient. There were occasions enough for being impatient. The Congress seemed to stand for projects of industrialism in which he saw no deliverance for the masses from their grinding poverty. He did not believe in mill-made civilization as he did not in mill-made cloth. He did not believe in an army for the removal of a menace to the real freedom of the country. If he was to impatiently fast, under the symptoms he had

described and others he could add, there were reasons enough to justify a fast unto death. He felt that he must be steadfast in the midst of the fire raging round him, and prove his faith in the ultimate triumph of truth. (*Harijan*, 15-6-'47, p. 194)

Referring to the newspaper report that he had differed from the decisions of the Working Committee and that the A. I. C. C. would raise its voice against it, Gandhiji said that the A. I. C. C. had appointed the Working Committee and they could not lightly discard its decisions. Supposing the Working Committee signed a promissory note on behalf of the A. I. C. C., the A. I. C. C. had to honour it. The Working Committee might make a mistake. They could punish it by removing it, but they could not go back upon the decision already taken by it. As for the people, he would ask them to oppose the Congress only when it tried to mislead the public deliberately. He might differ from the Working Committee. But having stated the fact, he would recommend their decisions for acceptance. (*Harijan*, 15-6-'47, p. 195)

To a question why he, who had proclaimed that the vivisection of India would mean a vivisection of himself, should not lead an opposition to the proposed division, Gandhiji replied that when he had made the statement, he was voicing public opinion. But when public opinion was against him, was he to coerce it ? To the charge that he had often held that there was to be no compromise with untruth or evil, Gandhiji said that the assertion was correct, but that the application must also be correct. He made bold to say that if only non-Muslim India was with him, he could show the way to undo the proposed partition. But he freely admitted that he had become, or, rather was considered a back-number. We had forgotten the lesson we had learnt during the past thirty years. We had forgotten that untruth was to be conquered by truth, and violence by non-violence, impatience by patience, and heat by cold. We had begun to fear our own shadows. Many had invited him to lead the opposition. But there was nothing in common between them and him except the opposition. The basis

of his opposition seemed to be wholly different from that of the inviters. Could love and hate go together? (*Harijan*, 22-6-'47, p. 202)

To those who said that it was wrong for him to say that he was a spent bullet, or that the country was not behind him, and contended 'Let him give us a lead and he will see for himself whether the country was behind him or not', Gandhiji replied, against whom was he to give the lead? It was not the British who had partitioned the country. It had been done with the consent of the Congress, however reluctantly. There was only one way to avoid the calamity, and that was by non-violence of the brave. But how could people develop it overnight? Leaders had agreed to the partition, as the last resort. They did not feel that they had made a mistake. Rather than let the whole country go to the dogs, they agreed to the partition — hoping to give the country a much-needed rest. He thought differently; he had said that he would rather let the whole country be reduced to ashes, rather than yield an inch to violence. But non-violence was his creed. It was not so with the Congress. The Congress had accepted non-violence as policy. Badshah Khan was the only leader who believed in non-violence as a creed. Even he had not imbibed the doctrine through and through.

"I have admitted my mistake", said Gandhiji. "I thought our struggle was based on non-violence, whereas in reality it was no more than passive resistance which, essentially, is a weapon of the weak. It leads, naturally, to armed resistance wherever possible." Intoxicated with his success in South Africa, he came to India. Here too the struggle bore fruit. But he now realized that it was not based on non-violence. If he had known this earlier then he would not have launched the struggle. But God wanted to take that work from him. So He blurred his vision. It was because their struggle was not non-violent that they today witnessed, arson and murder. (*Harijan*, 27-7-'47, p. 253)

Badshah Khan was the most miserable of men during those days. He saw that the future of his province would

be shadowed in darkness by this Announcement. Nobody could understand the state of his mind except Bapuji for he was not less miserable than he.

During a conversation Gandhiji expressed his innermost feelings in these words, "Nowadays I feel annoyed with everybody, and I feel angry with myself also. I cannot live long. My only companion is God. I am married to Him. I am not going to forsake Him, even though He forsakes me."

During these portentous days, Congress Working Committee meetings were held almost daily at the Bhangi Colony, and Bapuji met the Viceroy every day. The Mahatma's mental suffering was great. He felt no interest in living, though of course he still had immense faith in God.

Bapuji had another new problem to face, namely, of Refugees. Owing to communal riots in the Punjab and N. W. F. province in March last, thousands of people had migrated from Rawalpindi, and its surrounding villages, to Delhi, Haradwar and other places. Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru, therefore, proceeded to Haradwar on the 21st of June to meet these victims. When the "Father of the Nation" entered Haradwar a big procession was being taken out as a protest against him. The car in which he was seated was stopped, and two of the processionists climbed on the front part of the car, and began heatedly to argue with Bapuji. I was sitting with the driver. It was with much difficulty that we finally persuaded them to get down. The door of the car was open. One of them attempted to pull Gandhiji out by his leg. Pandit Jawaharlal, who was following Bapu's car, watched this happening. As he was unable to tolerate this insolence and disrespect shown by these miscreants to Bapu, he immediately administered a violent knock to that particular man and pushed him away. The car then moved on and Gandhiji reached his destination.

A huge crowd awaited his arrival. They began shouting anti-Gandhi slogans. Bapuji did not take offence since he knew that all those people had suffered untold

miseries, and that they had a right to ask relief from him, as he was their servant. He met their representatives, and visited their camps in the evenings. Speaking to them in one of the camps he drew their attention to their duties, and also added that they should not waste their time and money in playing cards and drinking. He was to address a public meeting as well, but there was such a tremendous rush that the mob could not be controlled, and Panditji, who had preceded him, sent word to him not to come, so he returned to Delhi that evening.

On the 2nd July, he attended the Delhi Political Conference held in a garden at Shahdara, and addressed the audience.

A member of the Hindu Mahasabha came to see Bapu on the 4th of July. Gandhiji expressed his beliefs to him in these words: "I still consider divided India as one country. A part of it has, no doubt, been separated from it, and is now called Pakistan, but the inhabitants of both portions of the country will remain Indians, and they will remain of one race. Therefore, Hindus residing in parts of Pakistan should consider themselves Indians, and by this affinity the Union Government will have to protect the Hindus of Pakistan in the time of trouble, and help them. If the Muslims of Pakistan begin to consider themselves a separate race, and the Indian Muslims having relationship with Pakistan begin to consider themselves as such, then they shall have to be considered foreigners, and they will not be entitled to the same privileges as Indian nationals. The same rules will apply to them as will be framed for foreigners in India. But I do not think that the Indian Muslims will act like this." Bapuji further continued, "There is no other punishment but death for those who act as fifth columnists. They must be shot down, although that is not my way."

On the 5th of July Lady Mountbatten came to see Gandhiji in his camp. It was the first occasion on which a Vicereine had made an effort to move out of her residence to meet another citizen. She entered his room, and squatted

near him on the mattress. She would not sit on the chair which was offered her, but continued to sit on the mattress throughout her visit.

I had accompanied Bapuji on many tours. The Kashmir tour was the last one with him. For a long time it had been discussed as to whether Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru should proceed to Kashmir or not. The Kashmir Government was unwilling to have him. At last Gandhiji decided to go himself. He left for Kashmir on the 30th of July from New Delhi Railway Station by special train. Manu Gandhi, Abha Gandhi, Bishenbhai, Sushila Nayyar and I accompanied him. The Government sent two Secret Service men and a police guard with him.

It was not an easy job to travel with Bapu, as every station was thronged with people eager to have his Darshan ; and they rent the sky with their "Jai Jai Kar". The crowds rushed madly in their effort to enter his compartment and obtain the sought-for Darshan, and touch his feet. These visitors did not consider his comfort, or his discomfort. Though it might be night time, with Gandhiji sound asleep, still they would insist on getting a glimpse of him. The more one appealed to them to keep silent, and to remain peaceful, the more they shouted and cried in deafening voices. They got annoyed and said that they had been waiting for hours to see him, and their wish was now being denied them. Most probably they thought that as Gandhiji was a Mahatma he needed no food and no rest, no sleep, and need not do any work. The only work he had to perform was, they thought, to give Darshan to all people. Gandhiji could not endure the noise. He thrust plugs of cotton wool into his ears, and then cover them with his fingers. But neither did he spare these importunate visitors. No sooner was a station reached and the train came to a standstill, than the mob shouted on one side, while on the other side Gandhiji kept extending his hands out of the windows, and thus collected funds for various Harijan needs. He asked his companions also to do the same. In this way were collections made at all stations. His appeal was seldom refused.

I had the good fortune to witness many such scenes, but by ill-luck I had also to witness another sort of scene, one which I had never before seen. When we were on the way to Kashmir the train reached Amritsar station early in the morning, and we heard the slogan, "Go back Gandhi". About one hundred and fifty to two hundred young men, with tiny black paper flags in their hands, collected in front of Bapu's compartment and began to harass him. They threw the flags at Gandhiji, and shouted slogans at the top of their voices. The Mahatma was sitting on his seat, with his ears tightly shut with his fingers, and kept observing these annoying activities with perfect equanimity. All this made me think of the Punjab of 1919 when, on receiving the news of Gandhiji's arrest, people determined to throw off the British yoke, and, as a result of the decision, streams of blood flowed in the streets of Amritsar. The same Gandhi was now the target of abuse by the people of that very province, who 28 years ago, respected him so much.

He reached Rawalpindi on the 31st of July, and spent the night there. Early next morning he left for Srinagar by car. On his way he halted at Domel for a few hours, to have his lunch, and reached Srinagar that evening. Gandhiji was welcomed by thousands of people, who had lined the whole route, and gave him a rousing reception.

Srinagar is a fairly large town with narrow lanes, some of which are so narrow that a car cannot be reversed or turned in them. I was entrusted with carrying out Bapu's programme, but I was not aware of the nature of the roads. Sheikh Abdulla's people wanted to take him to their party office, and it was arranged that he would go there in a car. Instead of taking him there quietly, they made his visit to their headquarters public. When he began to drive through those narrow lanes, thousands of people assembled there to obtain his Darshan. They shouted "long live Gandhi".

The car entered a lane leading to the office, and here there was no end to the crowd, and there was such an ear-splitting noise that one could hardly hear oneself. Bapuji

was terribly annoyed, and shouted at me so loudly, as I have never heard him do before. He said, "Why did you not make proper arrangements? Now I shall have to walk on foot." I was dumbfounded. I got down from the car and began to implore the people to keep quiet, and to allow him to reach the meeting place. I dared not face Bapu any more, and ran to the office to see what arrangements had been made there. Gandhiji also managed to reach here after some time, and I heaved a sigh of relief. Bapuji addressed the meeting and drove straight from there to meet Begum Abdulla. My misery was not to end so soon. Bapu had to attend another meeting and address the Kashmiri ladies. He summoned me and said, "You and Sushila go there. If you find the same big crowd come back and tell me. I will not attend the meeting." Sushila Nayyar and I reached the place. We found that some twentyfive thousand ladies were awaiting his arrival; they had waited many hours. The roads and lanes were just as narrow as the previous ones, which were also thronged by crowds. We dared not announce to these ladies that Gandhiji would be unable to come there. But how to bring him there was a problem. A solution was finally arrived at, i.e., to bring him by another route. But by that route, he had to cross a small canal. A tiny boat was pushed into the canal, and Bapuji was brought there without divulging to the public the route which he was to take. He crossed the canal by that boat and reached the meeting place somewhat late. Though he was annoyed, yet he went through the whole of the programme which had been drawn up. It was his nature to go through a programme to the end — once it had been chalked out.

Kashmir was full of intrigues in those days, and the Maharaja was a puppet in the hands of his Prime Minister, Pandit Kak. A strict watch was kept on Gandhiji's movements on the pretext that his protection was the Prime Minister's responsibility. Gandhiji met the Maharaja and Maharani and advised them to maintain good relations with the Indian Government. But his advice had no effect on them, at that time. Bapuji also met the Maharaja's Guru.

That meeting was very interesting. He was a very old man and it was said that his age was over hundred years. He was addicted to opium. When Bapuji reached his residence, he was under its effect and Bapu had to wait for a long time to see him. The meeting was very cordial. When Gandhiji departed, the Guru presented him with a piece of cloth, which he put on his head, as a mark of friendship between them.

He left Srinagar on the 4th of August and reached Jammu the same day, where he held his evening prayers in a vast open maidan, and made his post-prayer speech. On the 5th he left Jammu for a Refugee Camp at Wah, near Rawalpindi, where thousands of Refugees were living under the most pitiable conditions. Gandhiji advised them to compose themselves, and to shed all fear. He left Dr. Sushila behind to look after them. In the daytime he visited Panja Saheb where he was presented with a Saropa by the Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. There too Bapuji addressed a meeting and advised the people to be fearless, and to diligently perform their duties. He reached Lahore on the morning of 6th August, and stayed there for a day, and then left for Calcutta via Patna by the night train. This was his last visit to that city. When he reached Amritsar thousands of people were standing awaiting his arrival. They all felt ashamed for the incident on his way to Srinagar, and expressed their regret, and asked his forgiveness. Gandhiji promptly began to collect funds for the Harijans. They asked for his bag and promised to send it filled with subscriptions. But only a few days later such unexpected events occurred in the whole of the Punjab that their wish did not materialize. Under those unfortunate circumstances who would care to go there to collect funds for the Harijan cause ?

I accompanied Bapuji upto Saharanpur, from where I was sent to Delhi, and he proceeded to Patna en route to Calcutta, and then on to Noakhali.

Who can forget the historic and memorable midnight of August 14th ? That night, after centuries of slavery,

India was declared Independent. The goal, for which the Congress had been struggling for 62 years, had been achieved on that date. There was great rejoicing, and every nook and corner of the city was illuminated. There was no end to the crowds. The Capital City was decorated with national flags, and looked like a bride. In the evening, the Governor General, Lord Louis Mountbatten, unfurled the tricolour flag of Independent India and saluted it ; the scene was witnessed by lakhs of people. At that auspicious moment a rainbow was seen in the sky, and was considered a good omen. Whether it was good or bad, only God Himself knew.

On the 16th of August, when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru unfurled the Indian National flag on the historic Red Fort, a sea of human heads witnessed this great occasion and filled the sky with "Bharat Mataki Jai" "Rashtra Pita Bapuki Jai" (Glory to Mother India ; Glory to the Father of the Nation).

Gandhiji had promised to reach Noakhali, but when he arrived at Calcutta, he found the situation there very tense, and he had to prolong his stay at the instance of Suhrawardy who urged that it would be contrary to the practice of Gandhiji to leave Calcutta while it was burning. Bapuji agreed to stay on condition that both of them shifted to some Muslim house in a disturbed area ; and finally they shifted to a Muslim Manzil in Baliaghat on Wednesday, the 13th of August.

The next day, a miracle happened. Gandhiji described it in these words. On the 14th "it seemed as if there never had been bad blood between the Hindus and the Muslims. In their thousands they began to embrace one another, and they began to pass freely through places, which were considered to be points of danger by one party or the other. Indeed, Hindus were taken to Masjids by their Muslim brethren and the latter were taken by their Hindu brethren to Mandirs. Both with one voice shouted 'Jai Hind'.

"This sudden upheaval is not the work of one or two men. We are toys in the hands of God. He makes us dance

to His tune. The utmost, therefore that man can do is to refrain from interfering with the dance, and tender full obedience to his Maker's will."

On the 15th of August, the Independence day, he invited every one to undergo a twentyfour hours' fast with prayer for the service of India, and spent the day in spinning as much as possible.

## XIV

## "DO OR DIE" MISSION

With the advent of Independence and the creation of Pakistan communal hatred, which had been a deep wound in the heart of Mother India, erupted like a volcano and the country was plunged in a blood bath. A general massacre, loot, arson, abduction of women, and the throwing of passengers out of trains began in the Punjab with such violence that it shook the very foundations of our newly achieved liberty. People went mad, and became more bestial than beasts. There was no safety even for the infirm, the women, and the children. The horror-stricken people began to flee for their lives, leaving behind their hearths and homes, their hard-earned savings and their kith and kin. The memory of those ugly days which passed over the country like a grim nightmare, is indescribable.

When these unfortunate brethren reached Delhi and other provinces in their thousands with their tales of woe, people lost their sense of balance, and the communal conflagration spread like wild fire.

In Calcutta, where Gandhiji was preparing to leave for Noakhali, the situation suddenly took a turn for the worse after a fortnight of seeming peace. It so happened that on the evening of the 31st August there was a demonstration against Gandhiji's Peace Mission. He had just retired, and had gone to sleep, when at about 10 p.m. his residence was attacked by a mob and window panes were smashed. The two grand-daughters of Gandhiji, who were with him, went

out to pacify the crowd, but their entreaties went unheeded. Then Bapuji himself appeared, and though it was his day of silence, he broke his silence and appealed to the angry young men with folded hands beseeching them to be quiet. But they would not listen to him either. A lathi blow was aimed at him, which, fortunately, missed him. Another attempt was made on his life ; this time with a brick ; luckily, it missed him, but, instead, hurt a gentleman who happened to be standing nearby ; he was saved by the grace of God. The Police now intervened, and asked Gandhiji to retire while they got the situation under control.

The next day, Gandhiji said, " My resolve to go to Noakhali has collapsed, after this evening's happenings." He undertook a fast from September 1. It was to be broken only to quote Gandhiji, " when the conflagration ends, and the pristine peace of the last fifteen days returns."

His fasting worked like a charm, and within four days complete peace was again restored. He broke his fast on the night of the 4th after 73 hours by taking orange juice, though with this proviso : " If communal frenzy broke out in Calcutta once more he might have to go on an irrevocable fast."

When the condition in Calcutta seemed to improve, and Gandhiji was feeling more cheerful heart-rending news was conveyed from the Punjab, which made him restive. He decided to go there, as soon as he regained sufficient strength to travel.

Meanwhile, conditions in Delhi had also deteriorated considerably. Anticipating trouble owing to the disturbed conditions in the Punjab, an 86 hours' day and night curfew was imposed, as a precautionary measure, from the 28th of August. But from the 4th of September loot, arson and murder began on an extensive scale, inspite of the curfew, which was extended. The worst affected areas were Sabzimandi, Paharganj and Karol Bagh. The well-known surgeon, Dr. Joshi, was shot dead on the 8th in his hospital at Karol Bagh. People were horror-stricken. Nobody dared

to leave his house. The entire city was under military control. Shots were heard at frequent intervals, as if the city had become a battle-field. The hospitals were full of the wounded, and the dead rotted on the thoroughfares, uncared and unwept. I immediately conveyed this news to Bapuji, and received his reply that he was proceeding to Delhi. He left Calcutta on September 8th.

Now the problem which confronted me was where to accommodate him. He had stayed at Valmiki Mandir on all his previous visits to Delhi during the last 20 months and on this occasion also he was to stay there. So I visited the place, but found the atmosphere altogether changed. The Mandir had been taken possession of by the Refugees. On the road to the colony, the people who stood in small groups seemed to be terrified. They had sticks in their hands, and several dead bodies were lying on the road-sides. The markets were closed. Nothing was available; no vendors were seen; the place was unsafe in many respects. We had consultations amongst ourselves, and I took Shrimati Rajkumari Amrit Kaur to visit the place, and explained to her my difficulties in making the necessary arrangements. Finally, it was decided that Bapuji should stay at Birla House this time.

Gandhiji was to reach Delhi on the 9th morning, but the whole city was under curfew. It was lifted only for four hours during the day, but people would not go out, except to get their daily rations and eatables. Bapuji used to get down at Shahdara Station, but this fact was kept a well-guarded secret, and I could not go there to receive him. I went direct to Birla House. He reached there at about eight in the morning. Accosting me, he asked why I was not at the Station? When I told him that his arrival was kept a secret even from me, he was displeased.

This was his last arrival in this unfortunate city. He found the metropolis of India like a city of the Dead. He immediately announced his decision to "Do or Die", which he carried out literally. He was accompanied by Manu Gandhi, Abha Gandhi, Sushila Nayyar, and Bishenbhai.

Pyarelal and Kanu Gandhi were left behind to accomplish his unfinished mission in Noakhali.

This final stay of Bapu's in Delhi lasted about five months. I was fortunate enough to stay with him all the time, and I observed that he concentrated mainly on three issues: (i) To unite the Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims; (ii) to rehabilitate the Refugees once again in their own homes; and (iii) to remove all the controls. He aspired to see Swaraj, that is, Ramarajya in the real sense of the word. It was his constant endeavour, day and night, that India's name should not be besmirched, that it might attain its fullest glory; and that glory might spread throughout the world. He had become one with the poor, and felt their sufferings and miseries personally. Whenever I reported any matter to him, he asked me to put it down in his note-book, and promised to mention it in his post-prayer speech. In this way, he drew the attention of the people, as well as of the Government, to different problems. His post-prayer speeches were like the flow of a stream, and affected the hearts of the people. People might not have relished them, but like the medicine of a doctor they were most efficacious. He had started his post-prayer speeches in 1944, when he came out of the Aga Khan Palace, and this he continued till the day prior to his assassination. Most probably he finished all he had to say during 125 years' life-span in the last three or four years of his life, and just as he used to say that everybody had to take a fixed number of breaths, probably his speeches also were numbered, and this was why he could not deliver his speech on the 30th of January, as he had planned.

Speaking on controls he said, "Controls give rise to fraud, suppression of truth, intensification of the black-market, and to artificial scarcity. Above all, it unmans the people, and deprives them of initiative. It undoes the teachings of self-help they have been learning for a generation. It makes them spoon-fed." (*Harijan*, 16-11-'47, p. 409) When ultimately controls were removed, he was immensely pleased.

He was determined to send the Refugees back to their homes, and if he had remained alive he would have sent them back by now. His immediate programme, after normal conditions had been restored in Delhi, was to proceed to the Punjab to clear the atmosphere for the Refugees to go back. But he was of the opinion that he would not advise them to do so, unless it was made clear as to how the Pakistan Government was going to treat them, because he did not want the Hindus to go there and live there like serfs. He wanted them to be free citizens of that country, and to have equal rights, such as the other Pakistanis enjoyed. One day, I asked him, why the Government was spending crores of rupees to bring them here and rehabilitate them, while he was stressing ceaselessly that Refugees should return to their homes? "Will these unfortunate people then, spend all their lives in coming and going?" These people now said that they were not asked to express their opinion at the time of division; that they had no place in Pakistan, because their loyalty was with the Indian Union. Under these circumstances why did he ask them to return to their homes? How will the Pakistan Government believe in their sincerity?

Bapuji replied, "You cannot understand these things. If the circumstances had not changed, and if there had not been any conflagration, all these people would have lived in Pakistan, and would have pledged themselves as loyal Pakistan subjects."

As to Hindu-Muslim unity Bapuji had to sacrifice his very life for this cause. The Hindus were of the opinion that he was biased in favour of the Muslims, and was determined to help them at the cost of the Hindus. All his Urdu correspondence was entrusted to me, and most of the letters which I read were full of foul abuse of him, so much so, that it was rather difficult to read some of them with equanimity. They were written in such abusive language that it is a sin even to repeat those words. This was not confined to Urdu letters only. Hindi and English letters were also of the same kind. This would show what tremendous opposition he encountered. But he stood

like a rock unmoved and firm. He would say, day and night, that Pakistan would reap what it had sown, but so far as we went we had to keep our ideal ever before us, and our record must be clean. He warned that if the same state of affairs continued here in India as in Pakistan, Hindu Dharma was sure to die, and that people would remember, when he was no more, what he had predicted.

He warned the Hindus and the Sikhs many a time that if Muslims were not allowed to live in this country, India would not remain the ideal country of his dream, and he did not wish to live to witness that day.

There was complete chaos throughout the city on the day he reached Delhi. Human blood flowed like water. The flames of communal frenzy had spread everywhere. People had become worse than the beasts we malign, and human life had no value whatsoever. Even old and sick women and children were not spared. Everyone was terrified, and nobody knew what would happen next. But no sooner had Gandhiji stepped into Delhi, than it looked as if a brake had been applied. A Sikh Sardar met me that day, and I asked him how he felt. He replied that they had avenged themselves half an anna in the rupee, but now as the " Old Man " had come, they would not be able to go any further. It was the power of Bapuji's soul-force that restrained the hand lifted to strike. People might abuse him to their heart's content and oppose him, but nobody dared to breach the dam he had erected. Everybody fretted and fumed at his arrival, and demanded his immediate departure, to show what they could do to Muslims. When these things were mentioned to Gandhiji by his Muslim friends, he laughed and said that he had come to Delhi to " Do or Die ", and that unless they themselves allowed him to leave Delhi he was not going to do so. When people from the Punjab reminded him that he had come from Calcutta, especially to proceed to the Punjab and not to stay in Delhi, he replied, that he could not possibly go to Pakistan leaving Delhi behind in such a state of affairs, as it went against all his principles. Could he go there and tell them that, although Muslims were not permitted to stay

in Delhi, yet they should allow Hindus to return and live safely without molestation in Pakistan? He could not possibly go to the Punjab leaving behind smouldering fires in Delhi.

On his arrival in Delhi, he issued the following statement on September 9th :

" 'Man proposes, God disposes' has come true often enough in my lifetime, as it probably has in the case of many others. When I left Calcutta on Sunday last I knew nothing about the sad state of things in Delhi. But since my arrival in the Capital City, I have been listening the whole day long to the tale of woe that is Delhi today. I have seen several Muslim friends who have recited to me their pathetic story. I have heard enough to warn me that I must not leave Delhi for the Punjab, until it has once again become its former peaceful self.

"I must do my little bit to calm the heated atmosphere. I must apply the old formula, "Do or Die", to the Capital of India. I am glad to be able to say that the residents of Delhi do not want the senseless destruction that is going on. I am prepared to understand the anger of the Refugees, whom fate has driven from West Punjab. But anger is short madness. It can only make matters worse in every way. Retaliation is no remedy. It makes the original disease much worse. I, therefore, ask all those, who are engaged in committing senseless murders, arson and loot, to stay their hands." (*Harijan*, 21-9-'47, p. 330)

Those days in September are unforgettable. The Delhi Muslims came to Bapu downhearted, with their faces pale, and their eyes full of tears, and when Gandhiji consoled them the colour slowly returned to their faces when they listened to his soothing words. I cannot forget the 13th of September, the day he visited the Purana Quila Refugee Camp. I did not know that this camp was a stronghold of Muslim Leaguers. No sooner had they seen his car entering the gate, than they began to shout wildly, and tried to surround his car. I felt as if we had entered the storm centre. I was sitting beside the driver, and next to

me sat Pandit Shri Ram Sharma. Gandhiji, Dr. Sushila, Manu, and Abha were on the back seat. Pandit Sharma was terrified, and he asked me to get out of this horrible place somehow. My anxiety was how to tackle these human bloodhounds. The driver made a dash to get out by the other gate. Just at that moment, Bapuji was heard commanding the chauffeur to stop the car, and said that he would have a few words of cheer with these people. The car halted, and Gandhiji got down.

Thousands of Muslim Refugees had gathered in the open maidan. Gandhiji, resting his hand on Dewan Chamanlal's shoulder, asked him to repeat aloud what he said in his feeble voice. Slowly the facial expression of the listeners began to change. He urged them to be calm and shed anger. He said that God was the refuge of all, not man, however highly placed he may be. God would make right what man spoiled. On his part he promised not to rest till peace was restored again in Delhi, as it was before many men of both the communities had gone mad. (*Harijan,* 21-9-'47, p. 336). Sobriety was seen in place of anger, and these very people who seemed to thirst for his blood a moment before had turned into his friends. Hearing about the day's incident, Sardar Patel took me to task, and asked me not to take Bapu anywhere without his (Sardar's) previous consent.

Three days prior to this incident on September 10th speaking on the situation in Delhi Bapu had said :

" Nowadays the state of my mind is such that I cannot remember anything in detail. I only look to the cause. The condition in Delhi is quite different to that prevalent in Bengal. From there I was to proceed to Noakhali, when Usman Saheb came to me and asked me to stay for one more day. I went with him to see the spot where the riot had actually occurred. He could not control the crowd. Meanwhile, Suhrawardy Saheb came and asked me while Calcutta was burning, how I could leave it and go elsewhere. I postponed my departure at his request, and stayed with a Muslim family. There I was

attacked. Suhrawardy fulfilled his duties diligently. The effect was that he was able to maintain good relations with the Hindus also. But I had invited neither Usman Saheb nor Suhrawardy. Both came to me by themselves. Here in Delhi I do not find anybody who can accompany me and control the Muslims. There is no such person in the Sikh community nor in the R. S. S. I will not invite anybody myself, because that is not my way. Whosoever has come to me has come by himself. I therefore do not know what I shall do here ; but one thing is clear that I am not going to leave this place until normal conditions return."

After this, Bapuji wanted to visit the Refugee Camps. On September 10th, he went to see the Arab-ki-sarai Camp near Humayun's tomb where Meos were kept. All of them did not want to be sent to Pakistan, so Gandhiji said he would see what he could do for them. From there he went to see Jamia Millia Islamia, near Okhla, where he met Refugees from Jhil Kuranga and visited the Kasturba Balika Ashram. On his way back he visited the Hindu Refugee Camp outside Dewan Hall. The Refugees immediately surrounded him, and started abusing him. Nevertheless the Mahatma remained composed and said that they had a right to be angry with him because they were the real sufferers. From there he visited the Wavell Canteen Camp and the Kingsway Camp.

On the 11th of September Bapuji visited the wounded in the Irwin Hospital and consoled them. On the same day, the Pakistan High Commissioner had a talk with him, as also the Sikh leaders in connection with a ban on Kirpans by the Government.

On the 12th of September the head of the Rashtriya Sevak Sangh came to see Gandhiji and assured him that their organization was hostile to none. It did not stand for the killing of Muslims. All it wanted to do was to protect Hinduism to the best of its ability. It stood for peace. He also said that the Sangh would not do anything

which might prove harmful to the country. On that day he also visited the Jumma Masjid, and met the Muslim Refugees at the Hyderabad Palace Camp.

On the 13th of September, after he had visited the Muslim Camp at Purana Quila, he went to visit the Camps at Mottia Khan and Idgah, where he met the Muslim leaders, and advised them to do four things: Firstly, to issue a statement, declaring that they would always remain faithful to the Indian Union, and that if anybody was found to be the enemy of the country, he would be punished for it. Secondly, to state that they did not want to leave Delhi and that what they wanted was complete peace. Thirdly, to give an assurance that if anybody possessed arms without licence he would surrender them to the Government. Fourthly, to express their regret for the atrocities perpetrated on the minorities in Western Punjab.

Maulana Ahmed Said invited Bapuji to go and stay in their Muslim Mohalla for a few days. This Bapuji accepted forthwith, and I was asked to make the necessary arrangements. But Maulana Azad Saheb, and other Muslim friends, advised him to stay at Birla House, because they were of the opinion that by remaining there he could do more work. Therefore the idea of shifting to the Muslim quarter was given up.

On the 16th of September Bapu went to see a rally of R. S. S. volunteers held near the Valmiki Mandir. Gandhiji advised the volunteers who had gathered in their hundreds, and explained to them the real meaning of Sanatana Hindu Dharma. Addressing them, Bapuji said that he had visited the Rashtriya Sevak Sangh Camp years ago at Wardha, when the Founder Shri Hedgewar was alive. He had been very much impressed by their discipline, complete absence of untouchability, and Spartan simplicity. He then explained the root meaning of the word Sanatana; no one exactly knew the origin of the word Hindu. The name was given to us and we had characteristically adopted it. Hinduism had absorbed what was best in all the faiths of the

world, and in that sense, it was not an exclusive religion. Hence, it could have no quarrel with Islam, or its followers, as unfortunately was the case today. When the poison of untouchability entered Hinduism, its decline began. One thing was certain, and that he had been proclaiming from house tops, namely, that if untouchability lived, Hinduism must die. Similarly, if the Hindus felt that in India there was no place for anyone except Hindus, and if non-Hindus, especially Muslims, wished to live here, they should live as slaves of Hindus, then they would kill Hinduism. Similarly, if Pakistan believed that in Pakistan only the Muslims had a rightful place, and that non-Muslims could live there only on sufferance and as their slaves, it would be the death-knell of Islam in India. (*Harijan*, 18-9-'47, p. 349)

The same evening he visited the Refugee Camp at Kingsway, where a large crowd had gathered. When evening prayers began, and the verse from the Koran was recited, people objected to it, and prayers had to be abandoned.

Bapuji had now been in Delhi for a week. A great change had already taken place due to his presence there and the situation was improving. It was even felt that complete order would be restored within a few more days.

On the 17th of September Bapuji went for his evening prayers to Ganesh Lines — the Delhi Cloth Mill Area. Here too objection was made to the recitation of a verse from the Koran. Gandhiji said that after his experience of the previous evening he had decided not to offer public prayers, unless the whole audience, without exception, wished to have them. He had never imposed anything on anyone, much less could he impose such a highly spiritual thing as a prayer. The response must be from the heart. There could be no question of pleasing him.

Turning to the burning question of the day, Gandhiji said that he was prepared to understand their resentment, and their consequent impatience, but if they deserved their Independence, they should learn to subdue their resentment, and trust their Government to do its best. He was

not presenting to them his own way of non-violence, much as he would like to do, as he knew that he was out of favour, he instead suggested to them the adoption of the path, that all democratic nations had adopted. In Democracy, the individual will was governed and limited by the social will, which was the State, which again was governed by and for Democracy. If every individual took the law into his own hands there would be no State but anarchy, i.e. absence of social law or State. That way lay destruction of liberty. Therefore, they should subdue their anger, and let the State secure justice. (*Harijan*, 28-9-'47, p. 359)

On the 18th of September Bapu visited Faiz Bazar, Kucha Chelan and Tiraha Beran Khan. He addressed a gathering of about 150 Muslims at Janab Asaf Ali Khan's residence, and assured them that everything would be all right.

On the 19th he went once again to the same locality, and addressed the inhabitants at Kucha Tara Chand's, and also the Refugees at Pataudi Bhawan Poor House. Gandhiji said that he could not associate himself with the wish that India should drive out all its Muslim population to Pakistan, even as the Mahommedans of Pakistan were driving out all non-Muslims. Two wrongs do not make one right.

On the 21st of September Gandhiji visited the Mussalman locality at Pull Bangash, and there, sitting in the balcony of a house, addressed a large audience. He advised them to remain in their homes, although they might be molested by their Hindu neighbours, even unto death. Everybody listened to him with rapt attention. On his return he passed through Bara Hindu Rao, Khari Baoli, and Chandni Chowk, the most crowded parts of the city, now wearing a gloomy appearance and mostly deserted. At one place the Hindus tried to show their resentment by stopping his car.

During the next week, the condition in Delhi had considerably improved. The Mahatma was not keeping very well during those trying days. He had slight temperature and a severe cough.

On the 26th of September Gandhiji made a significant post-prayer speech the contents of which were as follows:

He said that he had been an opponent of all warfare. But if there was no other way of securing justice from Pakistan, if Pakistan persistently refused to see its proved error and continued to minimize it, the Indian Union Government would have to go to war against it. War was not a joke. No one wanted war. That way lay destruction. But he could never advise anyone to put up with injustice. If all the Hindus were annihilated for a just cause, he would not mind it.

There was a time when India listened to him. Today, he was a back-number. He had been told that he had no place in the new order, where they wanted machines, an army, a navy, an air force, and what not. He could never be a party to that. If they could have the courage to say that they would retain freedom with the help of the same force with which they had won it, he was their man. His physical incapacity and his depression would vanish in a moment. The Muslims were reported to have said, "Hanske liya Pakistan, ladke lenge Hindustan" (meaning Pakistan was achieved easily with a smile, now Hinduism will be acquired by force). If he had his way, he would never let them have it by force of arms. Some dreamt of converting the whole of India to Islam. That could never happen through war. Pakistan cannot destroy Hinduism. The Hindus alone can destroy themselves and their faith. Similarly, if Islam was destroyed, it would be destroyed by the Muslims in Pakistan, not by the Hindus in Hindustan. (*Harijan*, 5-10-'47, p. 362)

The 2nd of October was his birthday according to the English Calendar. It was his 79th birthday, and the last one he was to spend on earth. I presented him with a loin-cloth woven out of my hand-spun yarn. He now suffered from a terrible cough, due, perhaps, to the amount of anxiety and suffering which he had undergone during the past year, such as, he had never suffered before. This was no occasion for rejoicings, still, his companions came to pay

their respects, and presented him with flowers and fruit. From early morning, the stream of visitors had begun to come, and who imagined that they were celebrating his very last birthday amongst them ? Bapuji had not a moment's peace. The following incident shows the state of his mind. Sardar Patel and other colleagues were sitting in his room, and Gandhiji jokingly said, how he could ask his mourners to retire. Hearing this, they immediately stood up to leave.

Addressing the audience in his post-prayer speech, Gandhiji said that there was nothing but agony in his heart. Time was when whatever he said, the people followed. To-day his was a lone voice. Many friends had hoped that he would live to be 125, but he had lost all desire to live long, let alone 125 years. He was utterly unable to appropriate any of the congratulations showered on him. He could not live, while hatred and killing marked the atmosphere. (*Harijan*, 12-10-'47, p. 367)

According to the Hindu Calendar, Charkha Dwadashi, his birthday, fell on the 11th of October. On that day, Gujaratis of Delhi came to pay their respects to him. Addressing them he said that the time was unfavourable for enthusiastic celebration of Charkha Jayanti. He had called the Charkha, the symbol of non-violence. That symbol appeared to have been rejected, else they would not, today, be witnessing these scenes of fratricide and the like. He asked himself whether it was not enough to stop the observance of the Charkha Jayanti completely, but there was a lurking hope in his heart that there might be a few scattered individuals at least, who might be true to the message of the wheel. Hence, it was for their sake that the Charkha Jayanti should continue to be observed. (*Harijan*, 19-11-'47, pp. 379-80)

On the 25th of October Gandhiji visited the Delhi District Jail, and held his evening prayers there. Addressing the prisoners he said that he was a seasoned ex-prisoner himself. He had served various jail terms in South Africa and India. What would their jails be like in free

India? He had long held the opinion that all criminals should be treated as patients, and that jails should be converted into hospitals, admitting this class of patients for treatment and cure. No one committed a crime for the fun of it. It was a sign of a diseased mind. The causes of this particular disease should be investigated and removed. They need not have enormous buildings when their jails became hospitals. No country could afford that, much less a poor country like India. But the mental attitude of the jail staff should be that of physicians and nurses in a hospital. The prisoners should feel that the officials were their friends. They were there to help them, to regain their mental health and not to harass them in any way.

As an ex-prisoner, with plenty of experience of jail-life, he would advise his fellow jail-birds that they should behave as ideal prisoners, and should avoid breach of jail discipline. They should put their heart and soul into whatever work was entrusted to them. They should so behave in their little community as to become better men when they left the jail, than when they entered it. (*Harijan*, 2-11-'47, p. 396)

At the conclusion of his speech, he was taken to plant a mango sapling in the jail compound to commemorate the occasion.

On October 29, Afridis attacked Kashmir, and the Indian Union rushed troops, by aeroplanes, to save the situation. On this, Gandhiji said that it was right for the Union Government to rush troops, even only a handful, to Srinagar. The outcome was in the hands of God. Men could but "do or die". He would not shed a tear if the little Union force was wiped out like the famed Spartans of old, bravely defending Kashmir. (*Harijan*, 9-11-'47, p. 406)

Evening prayers were held everyday at Birla House. On the 30th of October, the audience was asked if there was any objector, amongst them, who disapproved of the recitation of a verse from the Koran. One member rose and persisted in his objection. Gandhiji had already stated that if there was such objection, he would conduct neither

the public prayer, nor deliver his post-prayer speech. The prayer meeting was therefore abandoned; but from the next day, as the audience insisted that the prayers should not be stopped because of a few objectors, Bapu accepted their plea, and the prayers were henceforth held in spite of a few objectors.

On the 7th of November Gandhiji visited Tehar village, mostly inhabited by Muslims, who were determined to leave for Pakistan. Bapu advised them not to leave their homes, but they explained their inability to live there any longer as life had become impossible, and many of their dear friends and relatives had already left for Pakistan.

Mohammedans from Panipat came to Gandhiji, and narrated their tales of woe to him. They wanted his permission to proceed to Pakistan. Bapu always advised them to be patient, and to stick to their homes, but their complaint was that the East Punjab Government was very much against their staying there any longer. Bapuji therefore decided to see for himself the state of affairs, and to verify their statement. On the 10th of November he left for Panipat, accompanied by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. He saw the Muslim patients in the hospitals. He then met the leaders of the Mussalmans, the local Hindus, and the representatives of the Refugees. He had a frank talk with them, and advised them not to leave their villages or homes. He returned to Delhi in the evening. Despite his advice, the situation did not improve, and he had to go there again on the 2nd of December, and once more advised them not to leave for Pakistan. He asked them at least to wait until news was sent to the Pakistan Government that they were migrating to that country, of free choice, so that the Indian Union might not be blamed, and that it might not be said that they were sent away forcibly.

On the 12th of November, the day of Divali, Bapuji broadcast to the Refugees in Kurukshetra Camp. It was his first speech on the radio, and the last one too. Addressing them he said :

"Though I am speaking from the Broadcasting station, I am not interested in giving such talks. To suffer with the afflicted, and to try to relieve their suffering has been my life's work. I hope, therefore, that you will accept this talk in that light. Today is Divali. But there can be no lighting of Chirags (lamps) for you, or for anyone. Our Divali will be best celebrated by service to others, and you will celebrate it by living in your Camp as brothers, and looking upon everyone as your own. If you will do that you will come through victorious.

"I am not one of those who believe that you, who have left your lands and homes in Pakistan, have been uprooted from there for all time. I, for one, shall not rest content, and will do all that lies within my power to see that all of you are reinstalled, and are able to return with honour and safety from where you have today been driven out. I shall continue, as long as I live, to work for this end." (*Harijan*, 23-11-'47, pp. 417-18)

On the 15th of November Gandhiji attended the A. I. C. C. meeting, where he told the audience of the uselessness of controls. In his opinion it was criminal to have them. The control system might have been both necessary and useful during wartime. It might be good for a military nation. It was harmful for India. He was sure that there was scarcity neither of foodstuff nor cloth in the land. Rains had not failed them. They had enough cotton in the country and enough hands to work at the spinning wheel and the loom. Moreover, they had mills. He felt, therefore, that both these controls were bad. There were other controls too, for instance, on petroleum, sugar etc. He could see no justification for them. They tended to make the people lazy and dependent. Laziness and dependence were, anyday, bad for the nation. He had daily complaints about these controls. He hoped that the nation's representatives would come to a wise decision, and advise the Government to remove these controls, which encouraged corruption, hypocrisy and black-marketing. (*Harijan*, 23-11-'47, pp. 24-25)

On the 29th of November he visited the Refugee Camp at Kalka Mandir, near Okhla. On his return he took us all to Government House. Shri Rajagopalachari had succeeded Lord Mountbatten as Governor General. He welcomed Gandhiji, at the gate, and offered flowers at his feet.

Bapu attended a big meeting held in Gandhi Grounds on Guru Nanak's Birthday the 28th of November. He was accompanied by Sheikh Abdulla. Addressing the audience he said, "Let this auspicious day mark the beginning of a new chapter in your lives. Let the disgrace of driving out the Muslims from Delhi cease from today. We must be ashamed of hurting children, women, or old men. I fervently hope that such misdeeds will now become a thing of the past. The Kirpan is a symbol of sanctity to be exhibited and used in defence of the helpless and the innocent." (*Harijan*, 7-12-'47, p. 449)

He attended a meeting, on the 7th of December, which was convened at the Harijan Udyoga Shala. A joint meeting of the Charkha Sangh, Grama Udyoga Sangh and Talimi Sangh was being held from the 9th to the 12th of December at the Shala which he attended daily.

On the 19th of December Bapuji went to Jesarah, in Gurgoan Tehsil, to visit a Meo Refugee Camp. Addressing the audience Gandhiji remarked that his voice was not as powerful as it used to be. There was a time when whatever he said was acted upon. What had taken place, — the orgy of murder and arson, loot, abductions, forcible conversions and worse that they had witnessed — was in his opinion barbarism. What was the remedy? Gandhiji continued: He had no faith in the force of bayonets. He could only present to them the weapon of non-violence, which provided an answer to every emergency, and which was invulnerable. His might be a voice in the wilderness today, but he had no other message to give them, except this message of non-violence, to meet the challenge of brute force with the power of the spirit. (*Harijan*, 28-12-'47, p. 481)

On the 27th of December Gandhiji went to another Delhi village, Sammalka, where a Panchayat Ghar had been

built. He was presented with garlands, and an address of welcome. Speaking to the gathering he said that the meeting was held for the purpose of prayers. At such a meeting, therefore, addresses and shouts were out of place. He congratulated them on having built a Panchayat Ghar. Unless they did the work of a Panchayat, their efforts would be a waste of time and labour. Distinguished travellers from all parts of the world came to India in the days of yore from China and other countries. They came in quest of knowledge, and put up with great hardships in travelling. They had reported that in India there was no theft. People were honest and industrious, and hence they needed no locks for their doors. In those days there was no multiplicity of castes as at present. It was the function of the Panchayats to revive honesty and industry, to teach the villagers to avoid disputes, if they had any to settle them so as to ensure speedy justice without any expenditure. They would then need neither the police nor the military, and they would not need to approach any official, except as a friend. He stressed the need of cattle improvement so as to increase their milk yield. Their cattle had become a burden on the land for want of care. He also said that it was the duty of the Panchayat to increase the quantity of foodstuffs grown in their village. That was to be accomplished by properly manuring the soil. Then they must see to the cleanliness of their village and its inhabitants. They must be clean in body and mind. He hoped that they would have no cinema house. People said that the cinema could be a potent means of education. That might come true some day, but at the moment he saw the great harm the cinema was doing. He advised them to have indigenous games, and to banish intoxicating drinks and drugs from their midst. He hoped that they would eradicate untouchability if there was any trace of it still left in their village. (*Harijan*, 4-1-'48, p. 500)

On the 28th of December he attended a meeting of businessmen at Hardinge Library. Addressing them Gandhiji said that he agreed that control of prices was

unsuited to India, whatever be the case elsewhere, least of all on food and cloth. The Ministers were their servants. They could do nothing against the expressed wishes of the people. They would not stay in office a day longer than the people wished. In the course of their struggle against the British, for the last 32 years, they had shown what public opinion could achieve. The British had the force of arms to back them up. The present Government had no such thing to back them. But now they had much more. They had the force of enlightened public opinion behind them. (*Harijan*, 4-1-'48, p. 495)

On the 3rd of January Gandhiji held his evening prayers at Wavell Canteen Refugee Camp, where a large crowd had assembled to listen to his post-prayer address. The people observed complete silence, and no one objected to the recitation of a verse from the Koran. Addressing the audience Gandhiji said, "Peace does not come from outer possession such as wealth or palaces but from within. All religions have proclaimed this truth. When a man attains such peace, his eyes, words and actions bear witness to it. Such a man is content to live in a cottage and does not care for the morrow. God alone knows what tomorrow will bring." (*Harijan*, 11-1-'48, p. 509)

In one of his post-prayer speeches Gandhiji took up the subject of the duties of the people and said :

"I want to deal with one of the great evils which is afflicting society today. The capitalist and the zamindar talk of their rights ; the labourer on the other hand talks of his right, the prince of his divine right to rule, and the ryot of his to resist it. If all simply insist on rights and perform no duties, there will be utter confusion and chaos.

"If instead of insisting on rights everyone does his duty, there will, immediately, be the rule of peace and order established among mankind. There is no such thing as the divine right of kings to rule and the humble duty of the ryots to pay respectful obedience to their masters. Whilst it is true that these hereditary inequalities must go, as being injurious to the wellbeing of society, the

unabashed assertion of rights of the hitherto down-trodden millions is equally injurious, if not more so, to the same wellbeing. The latter behaviour is probably calculated to injure the millions rather than the few claimants of divine or other rights. These few could but die a brave or cowardly death but, their death would not bring in an orderly life of blissful contentment. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the co-relation of rights and duties. I venture to suggest that rights that do not flow directly from duty well performed, are not worth having. They will be usurpations. The sooner they are discarded the better. A wretched parent, who claims obedience from his children without first doing his duty by them, excites nothing but contempt. It is the distortion of a religious precept for a dissolute husband to expect compliance in every respect from his dutiful wife. But the children, who flout their parent who is ever ready to do his duty towards them, would be considered ungrateful, and would harm themselves more than their parent. The same can be said about husband and wife. If you apply this simple and universal rule to employers and labourers, landlords and tenants, the princes and their subjects, or the Hindus and the Muslims, you will find that the happiest of relations can be established in all walks of life without creating disturbance or dislocation in life and business, such as you see in India, as in the other parts of the world. What I call the law of Satyagraha is to be deduced from an appreciation of duties and rights flowing therefrom." (*Harijan*, 6-7-'47, p. 217)

## XV

## THE LAST FAST

In this fashion by his tireless and never-ending endeavours Gandhiji finally succeeded in establishing peace in Delhi. The Muslims, as a community, and especially the Delhi Muslims, realized for the first time that Gandhiji alone was their true well-wisher. It is the reason why, on his assassination, not only the Hindus and Muslims in India but even the Muslims in Pakistan shed tears, for they then found out that their real saviour had departed from this world. After losing him, they realized that he was as much a friend of Pakistan as of India, and that if he were still alive he might have succeeded in establishing a real friendship between the two countries, which ought never to have been divided.

In spite of all these efforts, his Muslim friends in Delhi repeatedly told him that it was next to impossible for them to stay there any longer, and that even to that day they were staying there only for his sake. This made Gandhiji feel sore at heart. One day, a Maulvi, an old acquaintance of his complained to him that he had been a Nationalist Muslim throughout his life, and had fought for the Independence of his country, but when freedom had been achieved, his colleagues had forsaken him, and had forced him to leave his birthplace; hence he had neither a place in this country, nor in Pakistan; therefore he asked Gandhiji to send him to London, and arrange a passage for him. Bapuji was terribly grieved when he heard this, and decided to go on a fast, commencing from the very next day, that is, January 13th.

Monday the 12th was his day of silence. He was writing his post-prayer speech. None of his companions could guess what passed through his mind during these difficult times, and what decision he proposed taking. As he was thus occupied, Pandit Nehru dropped in to have a short talk with him, but he too was given no indication about the

coming event. Bapu always considered his decisions regarding fasts sacred. He believed that they were inspired by God, and he, therefore, never liked to discuss them. The decision about this last fast was also prompted by his inner voice.

Whilst writing the article he sat upon a bed in the glorious sunshine in the compound. I was near him, when I received an invitation from Lord Mountbatten to attend a party he was giving the next evening. I showed it to Bapu, seeing which he laughed. When I asked him whether I should accept it, he indicated that I, together with Pyarelal and Dr. Sushila Nayyar, who had also received invitations, should attend the party. How was I to know that he was preparing to go on a fast the very next day? It was only when Dr. Sushila began to translate his speech into Hindi that we became aware of the coming event. But how could we possibly be attending parties while Gandhiji was on a fast? But everything was possible for him. He insisted that we should attend the party, because he thought that there too his fast would be talked about, and we would have a golden opportunity for explaining his views to those people. So we were obliged to go.

This is what the Mahatma wrote for his post-prayer speech which was read out on January 12th :

"One fasts for health's sake, under laws governing health ; one also fasts, as a penance, for a wrong done, and felt as such. In these fasts, one need not believe in Ahimsa. There is, however, a fast which a votary of non-violence sometimes feels impelled to undertake by way of protest against some wrong done by society, and this he does, when he as a votary of Ahimsa, has no other remedy left. Such an occasion has come my way.

"When on September 9th, I returned to Delhi from Calcutta, it was to proceed to West Punjab. But that was not to be. Gay Delhi looked like a city of the Dead. As I alighted from the train, I observed gloom on every face I saw. Even the Sardar, whom humour, and the joy that humour gives, never desert, was no exception this time.

The cause of it I did not know. He was on the platform to receive me. He lost no time in giving me the sad news of the disturbances that had taken place in the metropolis of the Union. I saw immediately that I had to be in Delhi to 'do or die'. There is apparent calm brought about by prompt military and police action. But there is storm within the breast. It may burst forth any day. This I count as no fulfilment of the vow to 'do' which alone can keep me away from death, that incomparable friend. I yearn for heart-friendship between the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. It existed between them the other day ; today it is non-existent. It is a state that no Indian patriot, worthy of the name, can contemplate with equanimity. Though the voice within has been beckoning for a long time, I have been shutting my ears to it, lest it may be the voice of Satan, otherwise called weakness. I never like to feel resourceless, a Satyagrahi never should. Fasting is his last resort in the place of the sword — his or another's. I have no answer to return to the Muslim friends, who see me, from day to day, as to what they should do. My impotence has been gnawing at me of late. It will go immediately the fast is undertaken. I have been brooding over it for the last three days. The final conclusion has flashed upon me and it makes me happy. No man, if he is pure, has anything more precious to give than his life. I hope and pray that I have that purity in me to justify the step.

"I ask you all to bless the effort, and to pray for me, and with me. The fast begins after the first meal tomorrow. The period is indefinite, and I may drink water with, or without, salt and sour limes. It will end when, and if, I am satisfied that there is a reunion of hearts of all the communities, brought about without any outside pressure, but from an awakened sense of duty. The reward will be the regaining of India's dwindling prestige and her fast fading sovereignty over the heart of Asia, and therethrough the world. I flatter myself with the belief that the loss of India's soul will mean the loss of the hope of the aching, storm-tossed and hungry world. Let no friend or

foe, if there be one, be angry with me. There are friends who do not believe in the method of the fast for the reclamation of the human mind. They will bear with me, and extend to me the same liberty of action that they claim for themselves. With God as my supreme and sole Counsellor, I felt that I must take the decision without any other adviser. If I have made a mistake and discover it, I shall have no hesitation in proclaiming it from the house-top and retracing my faulty step. There is little chance of my making such a discovery. If there is clear indication, as I claim there is, of the Inner Voice, it will not be gainsaid. I plead for all absence of argument, and inevitable endorsement of the step. If the whole of India responds, or at least Delhi does, the fast might be ended soon.

"But whether it ends soon, or late, or never, let there be no softness in dealing with what may be termed a crisis. Critics have regarded some of my previous fasts as coercive, and held that on merits, the verdict would have gone against my stand but for the pressure exercised by the fasts. What value can an adverse verdict have when the purpose is demonstrably sound? A pure fast, like duty, is its own reward. I do not embark upon it for the sake of the result it may bring. I do so because I must. Hence, I urge everybody dispassionately to examine the purpose and let me die, if I must, in peace, which I hope is ensured. Death for me would be a glorious deliverance, rather than that I should be a helpless witness of the destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. That destruction is certain, if Pakistan ensures no equality of status and security of life and property for all professing the various faiths of the world, and if India copies her. Only then Islam dies in the two Indias, not in the world. But Hinduism and Sikhism have no world outside India. Those who differ from me will be honoured by me for their resistance, however implacable. Let my fast quicken conscience, not deaden it. Just contemplate the rot that has set in beloved India, and you will rejoice to think that there is a humble son of hers, who is strong enough, possibly pure enough to take the happy step. If he is neither, he is a burden on earth.

The sooner he disappears and clears the Indian atmosphere of the burden the better for him and all concerned.

"I would beg of all friends neither to rush to Birla House nor try to dissuade me, or be anxious for me. I am in God's hands. Rather, they should turn the searchlight inwards, for this is essentially a testing time for all of us. Those who remain at their post of duty and perform it diligently and well, now more so than hitherto, will help me and the cause, in every way. The fast is a process of self-purification." (*Harijan*, 18-1-'48, p. 523)

The morning came, Bapuji was to begin his fast after taking his midday meal. Delhi was not Calcutta where a miracle had happened. Here the situation was quite different, and everybody was anxious about the result. Nobody could say with any degree of certainty as to what would happen in the end, but everybody had faith in Bapu's words, oft-repeated, that until God had some service to take from him, nobody could harm him.

The visitors began to pour in. Journalists and photographers surrounded Bapuji. He was quiet and peaceful. After taking his morning bath he came out and sat on his bed, in the shady garden path. His meal was brought there and served by Abha Gandhi. Nobody could say when he would take his next meal, or not at all, and therefore all were perturbed in their minds. Bapuji talked with the companions, who stood near his bed, surrounding him, while at the same time he went on with his meal.

At the stroke of eleven Gandhiji stopped eating, and a few moments afterwards prayers began, with Nanyo, Auz Billa, Parsee prayer, Ishawasya and असतो मा सद्गमय, तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय, मृत्योर्माऽमृतं गमय। (Oh God, lead me from untruth to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality) Then an English hymn was sung, and Bapu's fast commenced.

He continued taking hot water during the day. The general interviews had been stopped. Still he had to speak a lot because certain people came to see him, who could not be refused. He attended the evening prayers also.

The same thing continued throughout the next day as well, and he attended the evening prayer according to his usual custom. On that day, at night, some slogans were heard at a distance. As they approached Birla House the following words were heard: "Let Gandhi die"; "We will take revenge"; "Blood for blood".

At that very moment Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel were going out after meeting Bapu. When Panditji heard these slogans, he got down from his car and challenged the processionists, who were shouting these slogans, to repeat those slogans again and to shout, "Let Gandhi die". He said, "Let some one come out and kill me first." Hearing his challenge, people began to run away, and order was once more restored after a few moments.

Bapuji gave up spinning the day after which his fast commenced. On the third day, he became very weak and could not attend prayers. He dictated his message which was read out to the audience, and spoke a few words, from his bed, through the loud-speaker. He was lying in a verandah; hundreds of people came to obtain his Darshan after prayers, and passed before him in file. The fourth day passed in a like manner. He had no nausea this time. He was taking water only, which he did not relish. He was growing weaker, and a change was observed in the atmosphere. People were anxious for him, and efforts were being made to bring the fast to a speedy end. On the fifth day, it was noted by the doctors that his kidneys were getting defective. He now passed urine in small quantities, and his weight stopped decreasing. His liver too was not functioning properly. All were terribly concerned and disturbed, and he was urged by all sections to end his fast. Thousands of telegrams were received to this effect. The attendance at evening prayers also increased considerably. People came in thousands to have his Darshan, after prayers.

On the sixth day, the 18th of January, representatives of all sections and religions assembled at Shri Rajendra Babu's place, and accepted the seven conditions proposed by Gandhiji, and signed the seven-point pledge as under:

1. We wish to announce that it is our heartfelt desire that the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, and the members of other communities, should once again live in Delhi like brothers in perfect unity, and we take the pledge that we shall protect the life, property and faith of Muslims, and that the incidents which have taken place in Delhi will not happen again.

2. We want to assure Gandhiji that the Annual fair at Khwaja Qutab-ul-din Mazar will be held this year, as in previous years.

3. Muslims will be able to move about in Subzimandi, Karol Bagh, Paharganj and other localities, just as they did in the past.

4. The mosques which have been left by Muslims and which now are in the possession of Hindus and Sikhs will be returned. The areas which have been set apart for Muslims will not be forcibly occupied.

5. We shall not object to the return to Delhi of the Muslims who have migrated from here, if they choose to come back, and Muslims shall be able to carry on their business as before.

6. We assure that all these things will be done by our personal efforts and not with the help of the police and the military.

7. We request Mahatmaji to believe us, and give up his fast and continue to lead us, as he has done hitherto. (*Harijan*, 1-2-'48, p. 6)

After this pledge had been signed, they all came to Bapuji to persuade him to give up his fast. It was only when they, once again, re-iterated their pledge to fulfil their word of honour that Gandhiji showed his willingness to break his fast, and everybody heaved a sigh of relief. Anxious moments had passed, and they now expressed their gratitude to God. The prayer was held at 12-45. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad handed a glass of orange juice to Gandhiji with which to break his fast. Those present were offered pieces of banana and oranges. That evening several thousand people attended the prayers. Bapu attempted to join the

prayers, but just then rain came down and he could not stir out. He gave his Darshan from the verandah where he was lying, and also began spinning from that very day. In his written message he said :

" I embarked on the fast in the name of Truth, whose familiar name is God. Without living truth, God is nowhere. In the name of God we have indulged in lies, massacres of people without caring whether they were innocent or guilty, men or women, children or infants. We have indulged in abductions, forcible conversions, and we have done all this shamelessly. I am not aware if anybody did these things in the name of Truth. With that same name on my lips I have broken the fast. The agony suffered by our people was unbearable. Dr. Rajendra Babu brought over a hundred people, representing Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and representatives of the Hindu Mahasabha, the R. S. S., and representatives of the Refugees from the Punjab, the Frontier Province, and Sindh. Dr. Rajendra Babu read aloud a document in Hindustani signed by these representatives, asking me not to put any further strain on them, and to end the agony by breaking the fast. Telegrams after telegrams have come from Pakistan and the Indian Union urging me to do the same. I could not resist the counsel of all these friends. I could not disbelieve their pledge that come what may, there would be complete friendship between the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis, and Jews — a friendship not to be broken. To break that friendship would be to break the nation.

" May God, who is Truth, guide us as He has visibly guided us during all these six days." (*Harijan*, 25-1-'48, pp. 534-35)

His previous fasts were, as under :

1. 1913, Phoenix. Penitential fast for a week for moral lapse of two inmates at the Settlement. Took only one meal a day for the next four and a half months.

2. 1914, Phoenix. Fourteen days' fast for similar reasons.

3. 1918, March 12, Ahmedabad. Seeing the weakness of the Ahmedabad strikers, Gandhiji declared, "Unless the strikers rally, and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, or until they leave the mill altogether, I will not touch any food." A Settlement was reached after three days' fast.

4. 1919, April 13 to 16, Sabarmati. Penitential fast for three days when attempts were made to pull away portions of the railway track at Nadiad. An appeal was made to the people to observe a similar fast for a day. Suggested to those who had been guilty of violence to the Congress, to confess.

5. 1921, November, 17 to 22, Bombay. Five days' fast following rioting and bloodshed on the occasion of the Prince of Wales' visit.

6. 1922, February 12 to 17, Bardoli. Five days' fast in connection with Chauri Chaura incident.

7. 1924, September 18 to October 9, Delhi. 21 days' fast, as a result of Hindu-Muslim riots in Kohat.

8. 1925, November 24 to December 1, Sabarmati. Seven days' fast, after discovering moral lapse among Ashram inmates.

9. 1932, September 20 noon to 26 5 p.m., Yeravda Prison. Gandhiji's decision to start a perpetual fast unto death, without food of any kind, except water, with or without salt and soda. At 5 p.m. on September 26th Gandhiji was handed a Government communique, which satisfied him. Fast was broken.

10. 1932, December 3, Yeravda Prison. Sympathetic fast with Appa Saheb Patwardhan, who asked for scavenger's work in jail, and was refused by authorities. Within two days, however, the necessary assurance was given, and the fast broken.

11. 1933, May 8, Yeravda Prison. Self-purification fast for 21 days. "A heart prayer for purification of myself and my associates for greater vigilance and watchfulness in connection with the

Harijan cause." Government released Gandhiji on the same day. The fast was concluded on May 29 at Parna Kuti in Poona.

12. 1933, August 16 to 23, Yeravda Prison. 8 days' fast. Gandhiji was refused facilities granted before release in May. Harijan work not allowed from inside the jail. Fast. On August 29th he was removed to the Sassoon Hospital, still a prisoner. By August 23rd condition serious. Released unconditionally.

13. 1934, August 7 to 14, Wardha. 7 days' fast. Irate reformer attacked with lathi an opponent of the Harijan movement. Gandhiji took to seven days' fast, as "penance for intolerance shown by people towards one another."

14. 1939, March 3 to 7 Noon, Rajkot. Gandhiji charged Rajkot ruler with breaking solemn pact with his people. Fast. Viceroy suggested, with ruler's assent, arbitration by Chief Justice of India, Sir Maurice Gwyer. Fast broken at 2-20 p.m. on March 7th.

15. 1943, February 10 Noon to March 3, Aga Khan Palace. Three weeks' fast in detention, as appeal from Government to God for justice. Fast broken on March 3rd.

16. 1947, September 1 to 4, Calcutta. 73 hours' fast. Fast to be broken only "when the conflagration ends, and the pristine peace of the last fifteen days returns". Fast broken on the night of the 4th, after 73 hours with this proviso that "if communal frenzy breaks out in Calcutta again, I might go on an irrevocable fast."

17. 1947, November 6, Calcutta. Began to take reduced diet, owing to the Bihar riots, and then left for Bihar.

18. 1948, January 13 to 18, Birla House, Delhi. 5 days' fast. Fast began at 11 a.m. for an indefinite period to end, "when I am satisfied that there is a reunion of hearts of all the communities brought about not by any outside pressure, but from an awakened

sense of duty." Fast broken after five days, on January 18th, at 12-45, only when an undertaking was given by the representatives of all sections and religions, to fulfil all the seven conditions imposed by Gandhiji.

## XVI

## UNDER THE SHADOW OF DEATH

On the 20th of January Gandhiji had just finished in a feeble voice his post-prayer speech, the substance of which was repeated to the audience by Dr. Sushila Nayyar, when a loud explosion was heard which shook the whole building. He remained seated. He thought that it was some military practice. But when he was informed that a bomb had exploded, which was meant for him, and a youth, Nandalal by name, had been arrested and a hand grenade was found in his possession, then he realized the situation. At night when he was going to sleep I told him that I was informed that a big conspiracy was behind this, and that several people were implicated in it. Bapuji did not lightly dismiss this idea as he would have normally done, but he believed it.

Referring to this incident in his post-prayer speech on the following day he said that he had not realized till after the prayers that it was a bomb explosion, and that the bomb had been meant for him. God only knew how he would have behaved had the bomb been aimed straight at him and exploded before his face. Therefore, he deserved no praise. He would deserve a certificate of merit only if he fell, as a result of such an explosion, and yet retained a smile on his face, and bore no malice against the doer. (*Harijan*, 1-2-'48, p. 11)

From that evening a military guard and a few C. I. D. men in plain clothes were posted there.

One day, Shri G. D. Birla told Gandhiji that it must shock him to see the military in such large numbers, posted there only for his sake, as it was against his principle

of non-violence. To this Bapuji gave an unexpected reply. I was under the impression that he would support Shri G. D. Birla's views. What he said was that it was not so shocking to him as it looked to Shri G. D. Birla, as 'these people' meaning thereby Panditji and Sardarji, had to run the Government, and hence their responsibility was great.

From this, it will be seen that Bapuji did not consider the explosion an ordinary incident. The fault was ours. Our senses had been so deluded by seeing and listening to unusual happenings those days that we failed to pay due attention to them. We did not, for a moment, think that there could ever be any possibility of killing Gandhiji. We all thought that we would die before Bapu did, and, therefore, why be anxious on his account? But now, when I ponder over the incidents, which occurred from time to time at Valmiki Mandir and at Birla House, and when I connect all these together, my agony becomes unbearable and I wonder why I did not pay proper attention to them then.

It was felt, in those days, that Gandhiji had lost all interest in life. As he had no such word as "fear" in his dictionary, he was unafraid of death. Moreover, it was his firm conviction that as long as God had some work for him to do, no power on earth could kill him; let shots be fired, let guns bark, let bombs explode, and even let atom bombs drop. At the same time, he also had the firm conviction that the moment his work was finished on earth nobody could save him. I cannot speak for others, but as for myself, I had cent per cent faith in this belief of his, and perhaps that is why I was utterly unmindful of events. I had observed during several of his fasts when doctors were completely perplexed and ready to give up hope, God every time brought him out unscathed. This bomb attack on him was not the first. Several previous attempts had been made and each time he had miraculously escaped. But now I noticed that he was losing interest in living, more and more so every day.

He had long talks with Pandit Nehru, many of which lasted for hours, but he did not like to make any suggestion

on his part. When I told him that such and such wrong was committed, and asked why he did not interfere, he reluctantly replied that if his opinion was sought on the point, he would then make his suggestion, otherwise not. As a matter of fact he never thrust his opinion on anybody, and always gave everyone full liberty to act according to his personal conviction. He would give his advice and leave it to the individual to do what he thought best. But his detachment, pertaining to matters of this world, was increasing day by day. In a way, he was close to finishing his life's work. I drew his attention several times, to Government's huge, and often wasteful, expenditure. He was in full accord with me, but said that those who had not seen even lakhs had now millions to spend. What could he do? He would not interfere with anybody's job. Though people believed that nothing was done without consulting him, the fact was that he was totally unaware of many things which were being done, and he only knew about them from the papers. To my way of thinking he had become totally detached during those days. If his opinion was sought, he would express it; otherwise, he would mind his own business.

Time was when letters came suggesting that his work was over and that he should retire to the Himalayas, and he merely laughed at the suggestion. But, when on the 29th of January, a Refugee from Bannu, who was attacked at the Gujarat Railway Station, came to see him, and asked him in very insulting tones to retire from the field, I observed that it had a deep effect on him. The next day I read out a statement made by Master Tara Singh to him, wherein he had stated the same thing. This also had its effect on him, and it was but a few hours later that he retired from the field for ever.

As conditions in Delhi had vastly improved, he wanted to proceed to Wardha, and then to Pakistan, if possible. In his post-prayer speech on the 25th, he said that he hoped that they would now set him free to go to Wardha. He would go there only to do their work. Dr. Rajendra Prasad

too would go with him. But he could go only with their blessings coupled with the solemn guarantee that things would be well during his absence. He wanted to visit Pakistan too. But since, legally, Pakistan was now a foreign territory, he could go there only with the permission and consent, if not on the invitation, of the Pakistan Government.

Addressing the audience on the 26th of January, Independence Day, Gandhiji said, "This observance was quite appropriate when we were fighting for an Independence that we had neither seen nor handled. Now that we have handled it, we seem to be disillusioned. At least I am, even if you are not." (*Harijan*, 1-2-'48, p. 14)

One of the seven conditions, which he had imposed, before he would break his fast, was that the annual Urs celebration at Bakhtiar Chisti's Dargah at Mehrauli should be observed peacefully so that the Muslims might attend it without any fear. The Urs was going to be held on the 27th of January. Bapuji, and his companions went there at 10 o'clock to join in the festivities. It was his last journey from Birla House. He visited the tomb, and there the Auzbilla was recited. Then he came out and addressed a meeting of several thousands.

He also visited several old monuments connected with this Mazar, and returned to Birla House at 12 noon.

He continued his evening prayers and post-prayer speeches till the 29th — a day prior to his assassination. On that day, it was his last public prayer and speech, in which he referred to a deputation of about forty Refugees from Bannu, who had called on him in the afternoon. Poor men, they were in an afflicted state, and he prized their Darshan. As he had other engagements, they were good enough, at his request, to have their statements recorded by Shri Brijkrishna. One of them, however, exclaimed that they owed their miseries to Gandhiji, and angrily asked him to leave them alone, and retire to the Himalayas. Gandhiji asked him at whose bidding he should go. Some were annoyed, and a few went to the length of abusing him, while many eulogized his efforts. The only course, therefore, open to him was to

follow the dictates of God, who spoke to men in the innermost chamber of the heart. There were women too in the company. He regarded them all as his brothers and sisters. God was our one true friend. We were entirely in His hands. He did not care to go and enjoy the peace of the mountains, but would be content with what peace he could extract from the surrounding turmoil. He, therefore, preferred to stay in their midst ; adding that if they all went to the Himalayas he might follow them as their servant. (*Harijan*, 8-2-'48, p. 21)

Further continuing, Gandhiji referred to the complaints brought to him that the Refugees, though provided with food, shelter and clothing, were averse to any work. If a man was in distress the key to his happiness lay in labour. God did not create man to eat, drink and make merry. The Gita taught that one should perform Yajna (bread labour) and partake of the fruit of that labour. Millionaires, who ate without work, were parasites. Even they should eat by the sweat of their brow, or should go without food. The only permissible exception was the disabled for whom society should provide. There was a variety of work for the Refugees to do, such as maintaining sanitation, including the cleaning of latrines, spinning, and other crafts. They should learn to make the best of the situation in which they found themselves.

Gandhiji then spoke about the peasants. If he had his say our Governor General and our Premier would be drawn from the Kisans. In his childhood he had read in the school books that the Kisans were heirs to the Kingdom of the Earth. This applied to those who laboured on the land, and ate from what they produced. Such Kisans to be worthy of high offices might be illiterate, provided they had robust common sense, great personal bravery, unimpeachable integrity and patriotism above suspicion. As real producers of wealth they were verily the masters, while we had enslaved them. It had been suggested to him that the higher secretariat posts should also be manned by Kisans. He would endorse this suggestion, provided they were

suitable, and had knowledge of the work expected of them. When Kisans of this type were forthcoming, he would publicly ask Ministers and others to make room for them. (*Harjian*, 8-2-'48, p. 21)

## XVII

## "MAHA NIRVAN" EVENING

What shall I write regarding the happenings of the 30th January, 1948? I had never dreamt that I would have to bear the pangs of separation from Bapu one day. That he would not die before me, was my firm conviction. I had taken refuge in him and he alone was my all in all, even though the Almighty should have come first.

It was Friday morning. He got up at 3-30 a.m. as usual and performed his toilet and ablutions. Prayers were held at 3-45 a.m. in the same verandah where he used to sleep at night on a wooden plank. In the verandah girls used to sleep on his right side, and I on his left. After prayers were over, he got up from his bed and leaning on the shoulders of the girls whom he called his "walking sticks", he came into the inner room and got busy with his daily routine. He took a glass of lemon, honey and hot water at 4-45 a.m., and drank 16 ozs. of Mausambi juice between 5 and 6 in the morning. After a while, he fell fast asleep.

He had an appointment at 7 a.m. with Shrimati Rajen Nehru, who was proceeding to America. He woke up in time for the interview, and after finishing his talk with her, he took a little stroll up and down the room. He had not yet regained sufficient strength after his recent fast to go out for a long walk in the open, so he used to take his constitutional within the room, for about half an hour.

At 8 o'clock he got ready for his daily massage. There was another room, adjacent to his sitting room, which was used for this purpose. How was I to know that I was giving him his last massage? Bapuji lay on the table and began reading the morning papers. During those days he had

changed the time of taking his Bengali lessons, which he used always to take at this hour from Abha Gandhi.

I massaged him for half an hour. It was terribly cold and two heaters were on in order to warm the room. After taking his massage he came out for his bath. Before going in for his massage he asked Pyarelal to go through the article, which he had written on the previous evening, on the future set-up of the Congress. It had been written for the coming Congress Working Committee meeting. Owing to lack of time he had written it in great haste and so asked him to revise and correct it, and to tell him if there was anything he did not understand in it. It was his last will to the Nation and clearly indicated in what direction his mind was working. The following is that document :

"Though split into two, India having attained political Independence through means devised by the Indian National Congress, the Congress in its present shape and form, i.e. as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine, has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages, as distinguished from its cities and towns. The struggle for the ascendency of civil over military power is bound to take place in India's progress towards its democratic goal. It must be kept out of unhealthy competition with political parties and communal bodies. For these and other similar reasons the A. I. C. C. resolves to disband the existing Congress Organization and flower into a Loka Sevak Sangh under the following rules, with power to alter them, as occasion may demand :

"Every Panchayat of five adult men or women, being villager or village-minded, shall form a unit.

"Two such contiguous Panchayats shall form a working party under a leader, elected from among themselves.

"When there are one hundred such Panchayats, the fifty first-grade leaders shall elect, from among themselves, a second-grade leader and so on, the first-grade leaders

meanwhile working under the second-grade leader. Parallel groups of two hundred Panchayats shall continue to be formed till they cover the whole of India, each succeeding group of Panchayats electing a second-grade leader after the manner of the first. All second-grade leaders shall serve jointly for the whole of India, and, severally, for their respective areas. The second-grade leaders may elect, whenever they deem necessary, from among themselves, a chief who will, during pleasure regulate and command all the groups.

" (As the final formation of provinces or districts is still in a state of flux, no attempt has been made to divide this group of servants into Provincial or District Councils, and jurisdiction over the whole of India has been vested in the group, or groups, that may have been formed at any given time. It should be noted that this body of servants derive their authority or power from service ungrudgingly and wisely done to their master — the whole of India.)

" 1. Every worker shall be a habitual wearer of Khadi made from self-spun yarn or certified by the A. I. S. A. and must be a teetotaller. If a Hindu, he must have abjured untouchability in any shape or form in his own person, or in his family, and must be a believer in the ideal of inter-communal unity, equal respect and regard for all religions, and equality of opportunity and status for all, irrespective of race, creed or sex.

" 2. He shall come in personal contact with every villager within his jurisdiction.

" 3. He shall enrol and train workers from amongst the villagers and keep a Register of all these.

" 4. He shall keep a record of his work from day to day.

" 5. He shall organize the villages, so as to make them self-contained and self-supporting through agriculture and handicrafts.

" 6. He shall educate the village folk in sanitation and hygiene, and shall take all measures for prevention of ill health and disease among them.

"7. He shall organize the education of the village folk from birth to death along the lines of Nai Talim, in accordance with the policy laid down by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

"8. He shall see that those whose names are missing on the statutory voters' role are duly entered therein.

"9. He shall encourage those who have not yet acquired the legal qualification, to acquire it for getting the right of franchise.

"10. For the above purposes, and others to be added from time to time, he shall train and fit himself in accordance with the rules laid down by the Sangh for the due performance of duty.

"The Sangh shall affiliate the following autonomous bodies :

1. A. I. S. A.
2. A. I. V. I. A.
3. Hindustani Talimi Sangh
4. Harijan Sevak Sangh
5. Goseva Sangh.

**Finance**

"The Sangh shall raise finances for the fulfilment of its mission from among the villagers and others, special stress being laid on collection of the poor man's pice."

New Delhi, 29-1-'48 M. K. G.

(*Harijan*, 15-2-'48 p. 32)

After taking his bath, he took his Bengali lesson and morning meal at 9-30. He had not yet begun to take bread, as the doctors had advised him not to take it, owing to some trouble which developed in his liver after his last fast. He took boiled vegetables, 12 ozs. of goat's milk, raw radish, tomatoes, salad, and the juice of four oranges. Pyarelalji, and one of his friends, had a talk with him during his meal ; his friend of the African days, Sohrabji and his family, also met him at this time.

After his breakfast, he lay down for a short nap and the soles of his feet were gently rubbed with ghee (clarified butter). He got up at 12, and took a glass of hot water with

honey. Then he gave interviews to the Maulanas Hifzur Rahman and Ahmed Said, and to some of their companions. He mentioned to them his intention of going to Sevagram. A conference had been called there on the 2nd of February, which he planned to attend, and he was to return to Delhi on the 14th of February. Bapu said to them: "I do not wish to go there without your permission. Maulana Azad has already permitted me. What do you say to it?" In reply, Maulana Hifzur Rahman said, "You may go, and we also can then judge what the condition here is like during your twelve days' absence." On hearing this, Gandhiji decided to proceed to Wardha without any further qualms of conscience.

Following this conversation, Bapu had a talk with Sudhir Ghosh and Pyarelal. Then he went to the closet, and coming out he lay down on his bed in the sunshine, and mud plaster was applied to his abdomen, while Abha and Manu pressed his feet. To protect his head from the sun, he put on the straw hat which he had brought from Noakhali.

At 1-30 p.m. Shri P. B. Chandwani read out some news to him, and then I read out to him a statement of Master Tara Singh in which he had advised Gandhiji to retire from the political field. Bapuji took a few ounces of carrot and lemon juice. At 2 o'clock some blind Refugees came to meet him. They had no proper place to live. He asked me to see the Custodian in this connection; afterwards the Allahabad Riot report was read out to him.

The daily interviews began from 2-15 p.m. By chance, I was present at all the interviews that day. Chawdhary Badlu Ram and Chawdhary Sher Singh of the Punjab came first. They had a 15 minutes' talk about the Harijans of their province. At 2-30, Acharya Malkani and Dr. Choith Ram Gidwani from Sind saw him. They were followed by the Ceylon delegate, Dr. De-Silva, and his daughter. Ceylon was going to be declared Independent on the 14th of February, and the Doctor had come to get a special message from him for that memorable day. His daughter obtained Bapu's autograph, which turned out to be his last

signature. At 3, Professor Radha Kumud Mukerjee came to see him, and presented him with one of his own books. Shri Mukerjee told Gandhiji that what he was preaching today had also been advocated during Mahatma Buddha's time. He showed Bapu some photographs as well. At 3-15, a French photographer presented him with an Album. At 3-30 p.m. Shri Vrishabhan of the Punjab Praja Mandal accompanied by three companions met him. At 3-45, Maharaj Nihal Singh, of the Namadhari Sikhs, came to see Gandhiji. A big Unity Conference was going to be held in Delhi on the 15th of February, and he had come to seek his advice as to who should be its President. Bapuji suggested Shri Rajendra Prasad for President, and promised also to give a message himself, and told the Maharaj that he would return from Wardha on the 14th.

The interviews were over at 4 p.m. Bapuji rose and resting on my shoulder he went to the toilet. He asked me to arrange for his railway journey to Wardha on the following day, and said that I should meet Sardar Patel, and should do according to his advice. As to Professor Radha Kumud Mukerjee's book, he told me to give it to Bisenbhai to put it in his luggage for Wardha.

I said, "Are you not going to take me with you? I have not been to Sevagram since 1942."

"I know it, but your work is in Delhi", he replied, and saying this he entered the bathroom. It was my last talk with him.

I came out of the room as I had to make arrangements for the railway journey to Wardha. Just then I saw Sardar Patel coming in. I spoke to him about Bapu's going to Wardha the next day. He asked me where Bapuji was. I replied that he was in the bathroom. Hearing this, he came out with me, and we both began to walk about and chat. At 4-15 p.m., Bapu emerged from the bathroom, and immediately he and Sardar Patel were engrossed in serious discussion. Abha Gandhi served Bapu with his evening meal prepared by Hari Ram, a servant from Birla House. He took 12 ounces of goat's milk, 12 ounces of vegetable soup, and the juice of three oranges.

45 minutes had passed. The clock had already struck 5 p.m. He was getting late for the evening prayer, but there seemed to be no end to their talk.

At last, Gandhiji got up. He put on his chappals and came out of the room. As usual, two girls were ready to support him on each side ; Abha on the right, and Manu on the left, and Bapu placed both his hands comfortably on their shoulders. Some members of the Birla family, a few other friends, and I were behind him. Dr. Sushila Nayyar had been sent to Bhawalpur for a few days on a special mission.

Gandhiji was late by ten minutes, so he walked towards the prayer ground in great haste. Who knew that the sun of his life was also setting in equal haste ?

Bapuji ascended the steps and reached the platform. As usual, the visitors stood in line on either side of the dais, leaving a passage between. They maintained perfect silence and kept excellent order. Somebody, from the left side, said something to which Bapuji replied, but I could not hear his words. He went forward a few steps with both hands folded to acknowledge the greetings of the crowd. He walked forward a few paces more. Manu observed somebody coming forward, from her left side. Thinking that he was advancing in order to touch Bapu's feet, she wanted to prevent him from doing so, as Bapu did not like anybody touching his feet, but the man rudely pushed her aside, so that Gandhiji's note-book, rosary, and spittoon fell from her hands. She stooped to pick up the things. Suddenly three gun shots were heard. I was closely following Bapu's footsteps with my eyes on the ground. Hearing the shots, I stepped forward, from his right side, and looked at the Mahatma. What I saw was enough to take away my breath. A stream of blood flowed on to his loin cloth, and the next moment he fell into the arms of the girls. All this happened with such suddenness that I was bereft of my senses, and my mind would not work.

That revered body, which we had tended like a flower and always wished that none should injure or even

rudely touch was there, now lying on grass and wet mud. His left leg was stretched and the right one bent. His head was in the laps of both the girls, and his face had become pale!

While falling he uttered his beloved Ramanama twice, which was ever enshrined in his heart. His eyes turned up, his tongue twisted, his lips moved faintly, and he went into oblivion for all time. He attained Nirvan Pada or Eternal Peace.

Lord Krishna has said:

"And he who, at the last hour remembering Me only, departs leaving the body, enters into Me; of that there is no doubt." (Gita, VIII, 5)

"That Yogi easily wins to me, O Partha, who, ever attached to Me, constantly remembers Me with undivided mind.

"Great souls, having come to me, reach the highest perfection; they come not again to birth, unlasting and (withal) an abode of misery." (Gita, VIII, 14-15)

Doubtless this saying of Lord Krishna is most appropriate for souls like Bapuji. Every day, at evening prayers, remembering the qualifications of a man of stable mind, he recited the last verse from the second discourse of the Gita, "This is the state" (meaning thereby the state described in Shlokas 55 to 71 of the 2nd discourse of Bhagavadgita). "O Partha, of the man who rests in Brahman; having attained to it, he is not deluded. He who abides in this state even at the hour of death passes into oneness with Brahman." (Gita, II, 72)

Bapuji had attained that Nirvan of the Eternal of which Lord Krishna had spoken. It was his cherished desire that he may die the death of a brave man. He had expressed this wish only two days previous to this to Shrimati Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who was the Health Minister. She used to come every evening to see Gandhiji from her office. As there were frequent disturbances at the prayers, she asked every time she visited him whether there was any such disturbance at the evening prayer that day also.

To this question Bapuji replied, "No. But should I infer from your daily questions that you are feeling anxious for me? If I have to die by the shot of a mad man, I should die laughingly. I wish that there may be no anger in me at that time, and may God be in my heart and on my lips then."

Perhaps God listened to this ardent wish of his. Bapuji might not have reached the place where he used to have his prayers, but he was prayer personified. His mind was concentrated on God, and he merged in Him while reciting His name.

The entire tragedy did not take more than five to seven minutes. It was 5-17 p.m. We were surrounded on all sides by the vast crowd, and cries of weeping and wailing were heard all over. The girls too began to cry, calling Bapu's name, and the people seemed as one paralyzed. My first concern was to search for a doctor, but unfortunately I could not find one.

After about five minutes we carried Bapu from the place where he fell and took him indoors. One of his chappals had got lost, and his spectacles were not to be found anywhere. Leaving Bapuji there to be carried to his room, I took a car and rushed to Sardar Patel's residence to acquaint him with what had happened. He had just returned from Birla House, and was stunned to hear it; he immediately jumped into my car and we returned there. Leaving him, I went to the Willingdon Hospital to fetch a doctor, as I could not get anyone on the 'phone. Colonel Bhargawa was in charge of the hospital, but unfortunately he was not in, and I searched for his assistant, who was busy conversing with one of his friends on the telephone. I was greatly distressed, and conveyed the news to him. Instead of at once jumping into my car he turned away, and continued his talk, as if nothing of great importance had happened. After a few minutes, when the situation was properly explained to him, he began to question me, and then said that he could not leave during the Doctor's absence from the hospital, and moreover Birla

House had its own dispensary. I was so disgusted that I at once left him, and hastily returned to Birla House.

On my way, I prayed to God that nothing really serious should happen to Bapuji, and that I might still see him alive, though it was a vain hope.

Reaching Birla House, I rushed to his room, and there I found that a few doctors had already arrived. They examined him and nodded their heads in despair. Sardar Patel sat by Bapu like a statue merged in the depths of sorrow. The Gita was being recited in broken voices. Seeing all this I concluded that fate had deceived us, and we really had lost our beloved Bapu for ever !

Gandhiji lay in eternal peace in the corner of the room where he used to sit daily to do his work, clad only in a Dhoti and a woollen shawl, his head in the lap of Abha Gandhi. At that moment, Devadas, his youngest son, entered the room with his wife. He took Bapu's hands in his and began to cry like a child. Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru tried to console him. The room was filled with visitors, and outside the room the crowd was impatiently waiting to obtain their beloved Bapu's last Darshan.

There was absolute silence in the room, and Pandit Nehru sat, with his head bent down, in deep anguish.

After a little while I nodded to Abha and signalled to her asking whether I could put the beloved Mahatma's head on my lap. She removed her knee, and now his head was on my lap. For a few seconds my mind was a blank, and there were no more tears left. I asked myself why I did not weep aloud ? Had I no real love for Bapu ? Did he not always consider me as one of his own sons ? Had I become stupid, or heartless ? Apart from a few drops of tears, my eyes would not shed any. I could no longer think what had actually happened. Having lost my all in all I seemed to have turned into a stone.

The noise outside began to increase, as the vast crowds grew restive. The problem was how to permit such a huge crowd to have his Darshan and how to manage them in

orderly fashion. Bapu was lying on a wooden plank. A few tables had been placed close together in the verandah, outside the room, and his wooden plank was placed on them. The doors were slowly opened and people were allowed to file in to get his Darshan, but this arrangement did not prove successful, as it was impossible to control such an enormous number of people.

Then we took his body on to the balcony of Birla House and laid it in such a position that everybody could have his Darshan, while standing on the grounds. People in great sorrow began to pay him their last homage.

It was now 2 a.m., and the last bath was to be given to him. Hariram filled the tub in the bathroom with cold water, and another wooden plank was put near it. Bapu was brought down, and the plank he lay on was placed near the door of the bathroom. It was only a few days ago during his last fast that I used to carry him to the bathroom in a chair, and gently put him into the hot water tub. The very same body I now put down on the plank placed near the tub, but now without life ! Reverently I took off his blood-besmirched clothes and handed them over to Devadasji. The woollen shawl, which was made of Australian wool, had three little holes burned into it where the shots had been fired. His handkerchief which used to hang by a cotton string to his girdle, was wet with blood, and his beautiful shawl was spotted with mud, and bits of grass were stuck to it.

Bapu's body now lay on the plank. I filled a tumbler with cold water from the tub and stretched out my hand to pour it on Bapu's body, but almost automatically my hand was arrested. Bapu never took a cold bath. It was 2 a.m. At this late hour, in the month of January, — a terribly cold January too — how could I pour this icy water on his body ? The person of India's uncrowned King was lying today lifeless and cold on an ordinary wooden bed. A cry burst forth from my despairing heart, and I could not control it.

At last, with the same cold water his body was carefully bathed. There were three marks on the right side of his chest in a triangular shape where the shots had penetrated. His back was plastered with mud. The blood still slowly oozed out of his wounds in a sticky, viscous stream. His body was then dried with a towel, and I once more, and for the last time, clad him in the loin cloth of my hand-spun yarn which I had presented him on his last birthday.

The wooden plank was covered with a Khadi sheet, and Gandhiji's body was then tenderly placed on it. I covered half of his body with one piece of Khadi of my hand-spun yarn, and other one I put around his shoulders, below his neck. I placed around his neck a garland — again of my hand-spun yarn — and his rosary which he used for the recitation of Ramanama. I applied sandal and saffron paste on his forehead, on his neck, and on his chest. Also, I put a vermilion Tilak. Then I sprinkled rose petals around his body. Near his head was written " He Rama " with flower petals, and towards his feet " Om ". On all the four sides incense burned, and a wick-lamp which burnt on ghee was lighted near his head.

His face was full of brilliance, and he reposed in his usual posture. It looked as if he would come to life again. For nobody could think, for a moment, that he was no more and had drawn his last breath.

But who could hide hard reality ? Men, women and children kept coming in their thousands to have a last glimpse of him. The doors of the room were open. They came in, paid their homage, offered flowers and money, and then quietly moved on.

It was now 3-30 a.m. — the hour when the watch with the alarm, which was put under his pillow used to go off and thus wake him up ; no sooner had he risen, than he would shout for me, and I would then wake up Manu, Abha and Shila — the three girls with us. Sometimes it so happened that he would not get up at his appointed time, even at the ringing of the alarm, because of his going to

bed very late the previous night. On such occasions, we were puzzled as to whether we should wake him up or allow him to rest a little longer. If we did not wake him up, he would, naturally, be late for prayers. This he did not like, and his orders were to wake him up in time, in case he failed to get up himself. We had his strict orders on this point, but at the same time, we thought how nice it would be if he could rest a little longer. But how could the time of prayers be delayed? The responsibility of waking him up was entrusted to me. I would call: "Bapuji", in very low tones, standing by his bedside. But if he remained fast asleep, I would hesitate, but the idea that prayer time was fast approaching would make me muster my courage together and call him a little more loudly. He then got up at once.

But today he did not get up, nor shout for me nor for his 'daughters'. On the contrary, all of us shouted and wailed for him in loud voices, still, he was unmindful, and would not get up. What had happened? It was so cruel and sudden that we found it hard to accept the reality of his death.

The prayers began, but, today, neither did he recite Namyo, nor did he ask to observe two minutes' silence. He, who used to utter all these things, was himself sleeping in the lap of eternal peace, and we, all sitting around him, were reciting in broken voices:

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत् किंच जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः मा गृधः कस्यस्विद् धनम् ॥

(All this that we see in this great universe is pervaded by God. Renounce it and enjoy it. Do not covet anybody's wealth or possession.)

The prayers were over. The Gita was recited; it was followed by the recitation of the Granth Sahib. By now it was dawn — 6 a.m. The crowd was swelling outside. Ambassadors from different countries, officials and private citizens

began to pour in to pay their last homage. After a few hours, his body was once again taken to the balcony for the assembled crowd to have his Darshan. It was now 11 a.m. The Military gun carriage was being decorated to carry his body. We brought his body downstairs, and covered it with the tricolour flag, leaving only his face uncovered. We carried him out, on our shoulders, and placed him on the bed of flowers so beautifully arranged on the flat surface of the gun carriage. Sardar Patel was by his side, immobile, like a statue. Of the other friends and companions some of them sat on the chariot, while the rest walked on foot in front of it singing Ramadhuna. As the funeral carriage, drawn by ropes, was pulled out of Birla House by men of the Indian Navy, the sky was rent with cries of "Mahatma Gandhiki Jai", "Rashtra Pitaki Jai". People who thronged the road, on both sides of the procession in their thousands, offered their homage and showered flowers. The chariot began to move very slowly towards Rajghat, amidst thundering shouts of "Mahatma Gandhiki Jai", and "Raghupati Raghav Raja Rama, Patita Pawana Sita Rama, Ishwar Allah Tere Nama, Sabako Sanmati De Bhagawan". These chants sung by thousands of people, in subdued voices, slowly pervaded the whole atmosphere. It took six hours to reach the Rajghat from Birla House.

It was now the evening of the 31st, and once again the hands of the clock had reached five, but Bapuji no more would go to the prayer grounds, resting his arms on the shoulders of his two beloved 'daughters'. Instead, many hands today supported him on their heads and shoulders, while carrying his dear body towards the sandalwood pyre. "Victory to Gandhiji", was heard from lakhs of voices, that were steeped in mourning and sorrow. At last, the wooden plank was mounted on the pyre, and we offered the last prayers standing around our beloved Bapu, and covered his frail little body with the scented sandalwood. In a short time that ever-shining and noble face vanished

from our sight for ever! His third son, Ramadas Gandhi, lighted the pyre with camphor. In a few minutes, the logs of sandalwood burned brightly, and the hot flames engulfed the effulgent figure that was enshrined in the hearts of millions.

Bapuji had gone! Was it really so? I do not like to think, for a moment, that he was gone. He had been amongst us with his body, now he had merely become body-less. He was visible before, now he had simply become invisible. For how could Death touch the deathless? How could I say, with any degree of truth, that he was not present amongst us? Every part of this Motherland is filled with memories of him. Formerly, he was separate from us, now he had merged himself in us, and the physical separation between us had vanished. Formerly, he served us, and looked after us under the limitations of his earthly body, now he looked after us, in many more ways. Has God a body? Have we ever seen Him? Yet, we know that he looks after us all the twenty-four hours incessantly, tirelessly! Bapu's wisdom and brilliance of character had come out of that Supreme Soul to guide us, and now he had vanished in Him, to guide us for all time.

Still, my heart is not consoled. Feeling most miserable like an orphan I continue to ask myself: Was my last 30 years' association with him a dream, or a reality?

## XVIII

## IDEAS AND FIELD OF ACTIVITY

It has been the privilege of Mother India to give birth from time to time to some great personality, who comes with a specific mission to fulfil, and is considered an incarnation of God possessing supernatural powers. It was believed that one was born with ten digits of God *, another with twelve, yet a third with fourteen, and some with full sixteen digits. Shri Rama came to this world to establish certain Codes and Traditions in Hindu society. He was called "Maryada Purushottama". Lord Krishna came to save the righteous and to destroy the wicked. Lord Buddha came to liberate suffering humanity from pangs of birth, death, old age and disease. Was Gandhiji also one of the incarnations of God, and did he also come possessed with an allotted number of digits of God? Was he born to save the righteous and to destroy the wicked, and to re-establish right in this lopsided and topsy-turvy world? Or, did he only desire to introduce a new sect?

Gandhiji himself never claimed that he was an incarnation of God. On the contrary, he strongly opposed this idea. He always considered himself a humble servant of Mother India, and through her of humanity. He desired he might die, whilst serving human society. He did not wish to establish a new sect. He even denied that there was such a thing as "Gandhism". He had not come to put any new truth before the world. His endeavour was only to interpret the truth as he knew it or understood it, and to follow it according to his light. This is what he wanted to put before the world. Of course, he did claim one thing, and

*'Hinduism believes that God incarnates Himself occasionally in earthly forms upon the earth in order to relieve it from some distress or suffering. The total digits of His powers are regarded as sixteen, but He chooses to incarnate in as many digits as are required for the occasion.

that was that he wanted to throw new light on old truths. He was a persistent seeker after Truth.

He was not introducing any new ideals but was trying merely to apply the old ideals to a new order of things. He never claimed that whatever he said was right, but whatever he said was the sincere outcome of his true conviction and constant practice, and there was only one purpose behind it all. It was his resolve to solve the knotty problem of realizing Ahimsa in this modern world.

Gandhiji never claimed to be superhuman or to possess supernatural powers. He always thought of himself as an ordinary person, and it was his considered opinion that whatever he did, others also were quite competent to do.

But if he was really an ordinary man, what was the reason for his greatness, and why was he loved by millions? What special quality was there in him that the whole world was engulfed in mourning on his death? There was no part of the globe where profound sorrow was not expressed at his passing. What mysterious power did he have, that not only his friends, but even those who considered him to be their enemy, were affected by his death, and felt truly grieved? There is, perhaps, no other example in the history of the world of such great sorrow expressed for one single individual as was expressed for him! What was the cause of it?

The mystery of Gandhiji's greatness, the universal admiration and affection he enjoyed, and the success of his life was due to his adherence to truth, and to his sense of justice, his constant wakefulness, his universal love and his fearlessness. He was a revolutionary, searcher after truth, and a reformer. He was a servant of the first order, and a man of austerity in the highest degree. He considered truth to be God; to attain that truth that is God, he considered fearlessness and love to be the only means. In fact, Gandhiji loved truth from his very childhood. Since the time he read the story of Harishchandra and Prahlad, the quest for truth had awakened in him. He was so deeply affected by the story of Prahlad that he modelled his experiments of Satyagraha on the fearless determination of that

child. False pride, hypocrisy, and delusion were no part of his personality. He was outspoken and transparent.

He had learnt fearlessness from his nurse. He used to feel very very afraid as a child. But his nurse taught him that by repeating the name of Rama all fears would disappear. Ever since then he began to repeat the name of Rama, and day to day he grew less fearful till all fear finally vanished.

His love for humanity was all-embracing, and capable of accepting all persons, good and bad. Everyone had such confidence in him that whosoever came into contact with him did not hesitate to divulge his innermost secrets to him. A man might have committed the greatest blunder, the deepest sin, yet he would confess without any qualms everything to Gandhiji, and would feel safe in the shadow of Bapu's love and his capacity to keep people's confidences. He hated sin, but never the sinner. He had great sympathy for the sinner, and always tried to help him reform himself.

As I have already stated, Gandhiji did not preach a new creed. What he did was to discover the buried treasures of Hindu religion, to remove from them the dust of ages, to polish them up, and present them in a new light to human society. Not only this, he somewhat added to that treasure which was diminishing day by day. He claimed to be a Sanatani Hindu but the interpretation of his Sanatana Dharma was different from that of others. He believed in the lofty ideals of Sanatana Dharma and not in the narrow-mindedness of today. In the conception of his Sanatana Dharma there was no place for enmity between man and man, but only for love. If he was an incarnation, he was the incarnation of suffering humanity. He considered untouchability and all distinctions of high and low in Sanatana Dharma, as poison or even as death for it, and proclaimed that if Hindu Dharma was to live, it would have to give up the difference between Savarna and Avarna i.e. high and low castes. He believed in Varnashrama, but not in its present form. Slaves had no caste, he said. The only caste which they possessed was that of

humanity. He believed in the equality of all religions and considered that every religion was a means whereby to reach the ultimate truth. "Truth is One; wise men interpret it in different ways." This saying of the Vedas he always cherished.

Gandhiji seems to have come to this earth to liberate the suppressed and the under-privileged, and to wean the world of its prevailing violence. He wanted to lift up man from his degraded animal state, and to make him a human being in the real sense. His heart refused to inflict violence or to suffer injustice silently and without any resistance. He did not consider one who suffered injustice and tyranny as less responsible for them than he who inflicted them.

He resisted evil with courage both in his family and his caste, and finally tried to do the same among the countrymen. He opposed the evil practices both of his co-religionists and of those of other faiths, of his countrymen, and of foreigners, of capitalists, and of labourers, of Rajahs and Maharajahs, and of Kisans, of the Government, and of the governed. But his fight was against untruth, and violence, not against persons.

Wherever untruth, injustice, and violence prevailed or there was anti-social activity of any kind, Gandhiji raised his voice of protest and resisted it to the end.

He was a born revolutionary. His life was a chronicle of revolt and opposition. Since the day he began to have some knowledge of the world, he became conscious of injustice. To check it, he invented a new weapon which he named "Satyagraha" or "Non-violent Non-co-operation". This unconquerable weapon of his brought about a new revolution in the world, and shook the foundations of those Powers, which relied upon brute force.

Mother India had been trodden under the British heel for the last hundred and fifty years. Enslaved by a foreign Government, her condition had become pitiable. That country which had given birth to a great and ancient civilization, with art, religion and knowledge of a high order, was losing its all due to ruthless suppression by the

West. With the loss of her independence, the people had lost the ability even of feeding and clothing themselves. In fact they had lost faith in God and themselves! To bear insults and suffer tyranny had become their daily lot. A brave people had become so cowardly that they were afraid of the mere sight of a policeman. They had lost their ancient knowledge, culture, and skills to such an extent that they were thought to be an ignorant lot. They had lost all prestige in the world. At that time, when India had reached the depth of her degradation one brave man roared like a lion, and blowing his conch sounded his "Awake and Arise" signal. He gave his people the nectar of Satyagraha to drink and be courageous. He proclaimed to the world that one nation could not lord it over the other without its consent, however powerful it may be.

His gift of Satyagraha was like Rama's arrow, which ever proved successful. Truth and Non-violence were the two wings of that arrow, and propelled by them it led to victory. This power could be used at all times and in all places, provided it was based on Truth and Non-violence. In the words of Gandhiji, "there is no defeat for a Satyagrahi".

He taught us to oppose injustice, tyranny, untruth, violence, oppression and inhumanity, wherever these were found. But with what weapon, with what means shall we oppose? Shall we adopt the same means which we aim to destroy, meaning thereby, shall we adopt deception, falsehood, cheating, and betrayal as our means? Can we resist our opponents with lathis, swords, guns and bombs which are the means of violence and yet establish peace in the world? Bapu said, "No. By using these means you would not be able to reach the goal you want to achieve. If you desire to remove injustice and tyranny, then you will have to find out the causes why they flourish; and then try and remove those causes. You will have to change the present order of things. Unless your means are pure, the end can never be pure. If you want to establish peace and contentment in the world, you will have to adopt right means for achieving your end.

You will have to concede the same rights to others, which you claim for yourselves. You will have to change human beings, and you will have to remove from them the spirit of hatred and revenge. You will have to root out the spirit of violence. You will have to bring about a change of heart in your opponents by undergoing voluntary sufferings yourselves. How long will your opponent do injustice to you, and how long will he tyrannize over you ? The day will finally come when he will have to reconsider his actions. Local public opinion, world opinion will be with you, and the oppressor will, undoubtedly, have to change his course."

The way of violence depends upon fear. Only he who believes in violence adopts such means to protect himself that his enemy might remain in constant fear of him, but a similar fear always lurks in his own mind, lest his enemy might revolt and overcome him. His consolation, if any, is that before his death he might be able to kill several others, and this has been miscalled bravery.

But one who believes in non-violence, neither fears anyone, nor does he create fear in others. He knows the art of voluntary dying, not killing. He never raises his hand against his opponent. He never feels angry towards him, and never wishes him evil, even in his mind. He wants to convert his heart by love and self-suffering. This is what Lord Buddha also taught, 'Conquer anger by the peace of your mind, conquer the wicked by your noble treatment'. One who follows this path is well-balanced in mind, action and speech. He has no deception in his mind. He always acts openly, risking his life without any hesitation ; he goes on progressing. He considers death his lifelong companion. This sort of non-violent man is indeed the only really brave man.

Bapuji wanted to remove the spirit of vengeance and violence from human nature, and wanted to replace it with love and non-violence. He had not come to destroy evil-doers, but he wanted to destroy evil from human nature. He was an expert student of human nature and had made serious study of it. He believed that everybody

could progress if suitable opportunities were made available to him. He never considered anyone his enemy. There was no trace of enmity in him. He claimed to overcome his opponents by love; and if he did not succeed, he ascribed it to his own shortcomings, and not to the failure of the weapon of Non-violence employed by him.

Adopting Truth and Non-violence as his means, the Mahatma aimed at establishing a fearless society wherein there would be no tensions and conflicts; a society in which there would not be any high or low, rich or poor, ruler or ruled. Such a society cannot be based on selfish motives, but on service to others, and self-sacrifice. In such a society there will not be either exploitation or enmity, ignorance or injustice. Neither shall anybody do injustice, nor shall anybody tolerate injustice. In that ideal society there shall be equal rights for man and woman, and equal opportunities for everybody to make progress. Rights shall not be obtained by asking, but by performing one's own duties. Nobody shall be allowed to remain idle; everyone shall be provided with work, and will get a fair return for his labour. Everybody shall be provided with food, clothing, and a house to live in. In that society the rule of external law shall be reduced to the minimum. No special importance shall be given to wealth. Instead, the daily necessities of life, produced by the labour of all, shall be obtainable by barter. In that society there shall not be any class-war, centralization of power, falsehood, deception, theft, bribery, and black-marketing, and there shall not be any necessity for controls.

This was his conception of a non-violent society, which he called Swaraj, Ramarajya or Sarvodaya.

Words like "fear" and "cowardice" had no place in Bapu's dictionary. He believed, however, that although a non-violent person without fire-arms was superior to a person who depended on violence and guns, yet it was better to be violent and to use arms than to become a coward. One who is afraid, stoops low and looses his manliness and independence; but if he is fearless, he can retain

his independence. He has two weapons which he can always use — Civil Disobedience and Non-co-operation.

His civil disobedience and non-co-operation were the outcome of this belief. It will not be an exaggeration to say that had we thoroughly assimilated his ideals, and followed them strictly, our Motherland would not have become red with the blood of our brothers. It was the result of violence, hidden deep in our hearts, which produced the murderer, whose hands did not tremble at the thought of assassinating that great soul, who was the incarnation of all kindness. It is a black blot on the fair face of Mother India, which will be difficult to wash away.

This country of ours is called Dharmabhumi (the Land of Religion). Here, saints and sages have always been highly honoured. Therefore, it is a matter for deep thought and consideration as to why a co-religionist of his assassinated Gandhiji, and why Hindu society was able to tolerate such a dastardly crime. Another important point which we shall have to consider is : What prompted the inhabitants of this sacred land to raise their hands against women, innocent children, the aged, the sick, and the wounded, and to murder them in cold blood ?

India is not a new country. Her history is not a matter of two or three hundred years, or even one or two thousand years. She is one of the most ancient countries of the civilized world. Her culture and knowledge date back into a dim past. In the history of the world, many countries were created, races came into being, and with them civilizations of various sorts. Many nations enjoyed a peak period, when their civilization spread. Then their power suffered a retrogression, and they became less important. All these facts are today matters of history. In the world of today these famous nations of yore exist nowhere, and we know of their former greatness and skill in various fields of endeavour only through sundry writings, buildings, monuments, potteries, textiles, jewellery, and other crafts — specimens of which are dug up from time to time by archaeologists.

We Indians, who consider ourselves as possessing an ancient inheritance, and feel proud of it, and are never tired of speaking of its past glory, will have to ask ourselves whether we are the worthy inheritors of that ancient and glorious civilization. In the long period of Indian history, is there any record of such inhuman barbarism as we witnessed a few years back ? Great battles had been fought in this country and many kingdoms had changed hands. Even foreign invaders had come, but at no time were we so morally depraved as after the attainment of our so-called independence. Today we are called independent, but if we really love our independence and want to retain it, we shall have to ponder with all seriousness whither we are heading. We shall have to pull ourselves up sharply, and save ourselves from moral degradation.

In his post-prayer speeches, Bapuji daily used to draw our attention without fail to our moral bankruptcy, and used to warn us day in and day out about it. He proclaimed that anti-social people had neither any special caste nor religion. They are present in every caste and in every religion. Our present-day society not only tolerates such people, but encourages them. As a matter of fact, anti-social activities have become a part of our daily life. This is the reason why our society which did not tolerate injustice and anti-social, or immoral actions, in the past is now giving protection to evil-doers. They are even being labelled guardians of Dharma. If present-day society continue to follow this course, it is certain that the day is not far off when its annihilation will be completed. Bapuji citing the final end of the Yadavas used to tell us that, although that race had attained the highest glory, and made great progress yet their moral degradation had reached such proportions that they made fun of their Dharmagurus, and descended to all kinds of wickedness. The result was that that race was obliterated completely in the very presence of Shri Krishna and even he could not save them. Had Indians understood the inner meaning of this warning,

taken it to heart, and had they been somewhat patient, they would have seen that the sinners would have died by the weight of their own sins, and nobody could have saved them. But by our own misdeeds we stopped the working of the moral law and thus saved the sinners. Not only this, but Hindu society ignoring Gandhiji's words of warning, had polluted its hands with his precious blood. A similar example is of the Jews, who by crucifying their great Lord, Christ, are wandering even today from house to house and country to country, and nowhere can they find permanent shelter, for all nations drive them out. This is according to prophecy in the Bible. The fear is that if Hindu society does not make timely amends for the terrible sin they have committed, and continues to tolerate anti-social, inhuman, immoral, and violent deeds as are still performed today, we too may suffer like the Jews.

Gandhiji had prescribed eleven vows, for believers in a non-violent society, which he considered like eleven rungs in a ladder set to reach the cherished goal. The eleven vows were: Truth, non-violence, non-stealing, celibacy, non-hoarding, body labour, control of the palate, fearlessness, religious equality, adoption of Swadeshi and service for the Harijans. These should be observed by all in true humility and with determination.

One who has a strong character is capable of possessing the qualities of non-violence, truth, and fearlessness. This is the reason why Bapuji gave so much importance to the observance of celibacy, and observed that the relationship between man and woman is possible without any sex impulse, and could develop into a relationship like that which exists between a brother and a sister.

In order to mould his own character into a strong one he paid attention to cultivating an indifference to food, and said that eating was only to satisfy hunger. It was not necessary to satisfy and pamper the palate.

To remove man's tendency to exploit his fellowmen, the Mahatma stressed the vow of non-hoarding. The cause of the present-day exploitation is our ever-increasing needs,

and desire for pleasure. These unlimited needs are the real and fundamental causes of great world wars, because inequality develops side by side with the desire to satisfy unlimited needs. To check the growth of needs, Bapuji considered all possessions, beyond necessities of life as theft. Nature has provided everything, in right measure, for everybody, but in human society, some possess more, and others less. This creates unsatisfied needs, and forces the less privileged to steal. Hence the reason why Bapuji laid stress upon non-stealing and non-hoarding, that is, not possessing beyond one's bare necessities.

Unless one does some daily bodily labour he can neither lead a celibate life, conquer his palate, nor can he be a non-hoarder. He cannot desist from stealing, because one who lives in society only for himself, also is a thief. It is said in the Vedas that "he eats only sin who eats alone." The same thing is also said in the Gita : "One who, without serving others, partakes of food, is a thief. Those who cook for themselves alone, are the eaters of sin."

This is why Gandhiji emphasized body labour so much. Only a labourer knows what real hunger is, and whatever he eats, he eats with relish and zest. He sleeps soundly. He possesses a strong body, and for him observance of celibacy and self-control becomes natural. He earns for himself, and eats the bread of his own labour. He possesses self-confidence and self-reliance, and therefore does not need to hoard. Thus, there is no reason why he should steal. He is always contented.

In a non-violent society there is equality of all religions, because a member of that society believes in equal rights for everybody. He considers all religions as various paths which lead to the same goal, and concedes the right to everybody to progress according to the dictates of his own conscience. He has the right even to commit blunders, provided he is pledged to truth and non-violence, and acts without any fear. Then he is bound to correct his faults, and finally reach his goal.

In a non-violent society there should not be jealousy between one another. A person must follow the good of his country, and should not be unmindful of it. To seek the welfare of his own country does not mean that he is prejudiced against the culture and customs of other countries. But his aim is to protect his countrymen from exploitation and plunder. He is certainly not fulfilling his duty if when his own country is in distress, his countrymen die of starvation, and remain unemployed, still he continues to consume foreign goods, and thus sends away the country's wealth. To follow the vow of Swadeshi teaches a person to do his duty by his neighbours.

It was to remove inequality from society that Bapuji agitated for the removal of untouchability. Many saints and sages who had preceded him, also had made attempts to remove untouchability from Hindu society, but none had given as much attention to this particular problem, as had Gandhiji. How could the idea of high and low exist in a non-violent society? So he prayed that if ever he was reborn, he might be born in India in the house of a scavenger. He used to state that his occupation was that of a scavenger, a cobbler, or a weaver. He repeatedly said that if it lay in his power he would make a Harijan girl, the first President of Independent India.

There is no doubt that it was due to Gandhiji that Indian women, who were the most neglected and unimportant part of Indian society achieved equal status with men. Before his championing of their cause, they were called Abalas (the weaker sex), and many of them passed their lives in purdah (veil). Gandhiji taught that they were not Abalas but Sabalas (the powerful sex). They were mothers, and they should be given the place of honour, as mothers. He sought to uplift women who had been discarded by society as "fallen women", and aimed at giving them the same status and privileges as enjoyed by other women. In many foreign countries, women had agitated for their rights, here in India by the

efforts of Gandhiji they attained equal rights without any struggle.

What about the Vaishyas? According to the Gita, three duties are ascribed to Vaishyas — agriculture, cow-protection and trade. Before Gandhiji's advent on the Indian scene, people were not aware how many villages there were in India, and what sort of condition the rural folk lived in. The educated were mostly concerned with the cities, and were content as long as their own particular urban area improved and developed. But Gandhiji pointed out that the real India lived in her seven lakhs of villages. By neglecting these village people, the Vaishyas had impoverished their country, and thereby lost their independence. Bapu held that the downtrodden and illiterate cultivators were the real wealth of India, and described their Panchayat Raj to be the real Ramarajya. He pleaded with the urban people that the tillers of the soil who were their bread-givers, should be paid due respect, and given their rightful status.

Besides drawing the attention of the country towards the villages, Bapuji also explained the real meaning of cow-service. He said that present-day cow-protectors were not cow-servants, but cow-killers. Unless there were healthy and clean cows giving plentiful milk their progeny too would not be strong. India is essentially an agricultural country. Eighty-five per cent of her population lives in villages, and depends on agriculture. The cow is their real wealth as agriculture depends on it. Therefore, they can survive only by service to the cow.

To the urban capitalists and business community he said that their progress lay in their hard-earned but honest income. If they continued to exploit, they were bound to perish. In pursuance of this view the Mahatma gave importance to the theory of Trusteeship. He used to say that the capitalist should not consider himself the master of his wealth, but as a self-appointed trustee, and he should spend all his earnings for the welfare of society, after meeting his bare necessities. If he did not perform

his duties honestly, then the Government was entitled to confiscate all his property, without giving him compensation.

## XIX

## CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

In order to give concrete shape to his constructive programme, and to prepare true workers for the good of the country, Bapuji created five organizations and divided his constructive programme into eighteen items. A brief description is given below of the five Sanghas, or Associations, which he established, in order to show the method of his work, and of the other items in his programme.

### 1. Akhil Bharatiya Charkha Sangh
### (All India Spinners' Association)

With the help of this Association, Gandhiji taught Indians to be self-reliant and self-sufficient as far as clothing requirements were concerned. By the introduction of the spinning wheel he gave to the starving millions food and clothing. With its help he saved the country from foreign exploitation, and attracted the attention of the country to its real need. He gave the same central place to the spinning wheel in his constructive programme as the sun has in the solar system. He regarded his other activities as similar to the planets which revolve around the sun. He pointed out that just as the cultivators of this country grew food for themselves to eat and thereby became self-sufficient, in the same way they could spin self-grown cotton into yarn in their leisure hours and thereby save crores of rupees from going out of our land. The two basic needs of a human being are food and clothing. Then comes shelter. But if the first two are obtained by his own effort, he would not have to depend on others; he would then become to a large extent self-sufficient and self-reliant. Thus, by becoming self-dependent, he would be liberated from slavery.

Once, when writing on the subject of Khadi he said:

"Khadi is a controversial subject. Many people think that in advocating Khadi, I am sailing against a head-wind, and am sure to sink the ship of Swaraj, and also that I am taking the country backwards into the Dark Ages. But Khadi connotes the beginning of economic freedom and equality of all in the country. It means a wholesale Swadeshi mentality, a determination to find all the necessaries of life within India, and that too through the labour and intellect of the villagers.

"This needs a revolutionary change in the mentality and tastes of many. Easy though the non-violent way is in several respects, it is very difficult in others. It vitally touches the life of every single Indian, makes him feel aglow with the possession of a certain feeling of power that has lain hidden within himself, and makes him proud of his identity with every drop of the ocean of Indian humanity.

"Khadi mentality means decentralization of production and distribution of the necessaries of life. Therefore, the formula so far evolved is for every village to produce and use all its necessaries, and, in addition to produce a certain extra, as its contribution to the requirements of cities.

"Heavy industries will have of necessity to be centralized and nationalized. But they will occupy the least part of the vast national activity in the villages.

"Production of Khadi includes cotton-growing, picking, ginning, cleaning, carding, slivering, spinning, sizing, dyeing, preparing the warp and the woof, weaving, and washing. Since the wanton destruction of this central village industry and its allied handicrafts, intelligence and brightness have fled from the villagers, leaving them inane, lustreless and reduced almost to the state of their ill-kept cattle." (*Constructive Programme*, pp. 11-12)

Bapuji, in his first book, *Hind Swaraj* written in 1908, had mentioned the spinning wheel, and had named it the

foundation-stone of a non-violent society. Ever since then, he strongly opposed the machine age of modern times. People laughed at his ideas, but that same machine age has brought in its wake two disastrous and costly World Wars, within the short span of 25 years, and we are heading towards the third. On the other hand, the spinning wheel played a conspicuous part in the attainment of our Independence and saved us from ruin.

### 2. Akhil Bharatiya Gramodyoga Sangh (All India Village Industries Association)

By the establishment of the Village Industries Association, Gandhiji gave work to thousands of artisans living in villages and saved various Indian cottage industries from an untimely death. Through this Association he tried to bring the villages nearer to the cities, and drew the attention of the urban population towards their rural brethren, living in lakhs of Indian villages. Writing about cottage industries, he said :

" Village economy cannot be complete without essential village industries, such as hand-grinding, hand-pounding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil-pressing etc. Given the demand, there is no doubt that most of our wants can be supplied from our villages. When we have become village-minded, we shall not want imitations of the West, or machine-made products, but we shall develop a true national taste, in keeping with the vision of a New India, in which poverty, starvation and idleness will be unknown." (*Constructive Programme*, pp. 14-15)

With the revival of village industries, Gandhiji urged, there would be decentralization, and explained how every village could then be a self-sufficient unit. If every village could meet all its needs itself, then it could become " independent " in every sense of the word.

He was of the opinion that only that which was surplus, after meeting all their own wants, should be sent out of the villages. In fact, he even went so far as to say that there was no real necessity for producing more than what was actually needed for the villagers themselves, as it would

then be necessary to find markets to sell the surplus goods, which would result in exploitation, thus starting the vicious circle over again.

Bapuji did not want his non-violent society to depend on centralized machine manufacture. The last World War had clearly proved that a country could easily be subjugated by destroying its vital factories. No sooner were the power-houses and the water-reservoirs destroyed, than the country became helpless and at the mercy of the enemy. Gandhiji wanted to make every village and town independent to such an extent that in case any part of the country suffered, it would not have any serious effect on the other parts. He wanted to introduce decentralization in all areas, even in the size of a field, so that one part should not have its misfortunes affecting the other parts. He wanted every one to become self-reliant, self-sufficient, and independent.

### Village Sanitation

Bapuji was very particular about village hygiene. He believed that our villages should be models of cleanliness to the rest of India. His advice to every worker was to take a basket and a broom, and live in a village, and be a co-sharer of their sufferings and happiness. Every worker was expected to clean the village paths, the wells, the tanks, and to ply the wheel silently ; and to teach the villagers how to spin and to acquaint them with other industries. In this way, he wanted village life to be touched at every point. To him going to villages and making speeches, and then coming back, without doing any constructive work was just a sheer waste of time and energy.

Writing about village sanitation Gandhiji said, " Divorce between intelligence and labour has resulted in a criminal negligence of villages. And so, instead of having graceful hamlets dotting the land, we have dung heaps ! "

### Health and Hygiene

On this subject, Gandhiji wrote :

" The art of keeping one's health, and the knowledge of hygiene is, by itself, a separate subject of study, and

corresponding practice. In a well-ordered society, the citizens know and observe the laws of health and hygiene. It is established, beyond doubt, that ignorance and neglect of health and hygiene are responsible for the majority of diseases to which mankind is heir. The very high death-rate among us is, no doubt, due largely to our growing poverty, but it could be mitigated, if the people were properly educated about health and hygiene.

" *Mens sana in corpore sano* is perhaps a just law of humanity. 'A healthy mind in a healthy body' is a self-evident truth. There is an inevitable connection between mind and body. If we were in possession of healthy minds, we would shed all violence, and naturally obeying the laws of health, we would have healthy bodies without an effort. The fundamental laws of health and hygiene are simple and easily learnt. The difficulty is about their observance. Here they are :

" a. Think the purest thoughts and banish all idle and impure thoughts.

b. Breathe the freshest air, day and night.

c. Establish a balance between bodily and mental work.

d. Stand erect, sit erect, and be neat and clean in every one of your acts and let these be an expression of your healthy inner condition.

e. Eat to live for service of fellow men. Do not live for indulging yourselves. Your food must be just enough to keep your mind and body in good order. Man becomes what he eats.

f. Your water, food and air must be clean, and you should not be satisfied with mere personal cleanliness, but you will infect your surroundings with the same three-fold cleanliness, that you will desire for yourselves." (*Constructive Programme*, pp. 18-19)

Gandhiji always stressed Nature cure. He has written about his experiences with this type of treatment in his book *Key to Health*. He was in favour of starting Nature

cure clinics for the poor and for the villagers. In more recent years, he started a Nature cure clinic on his own in Urulikanchan, near Poona, where he treated the local folk.

**3. Hindustani Talimi Sangh**

**(All India Basic Education Association)**

He established this Sangh to spread true education. He was of the opinion that real knowledge was that which led to self-realization. Recent education in India was intended to create slaves, and to keep the British Empire intact. The Education Department was mostly maintained with the revenue derived from excise. Gandhiji called his new educational system " Basic Education ". The object of this education was to train village children in such a way that they became ideal villagers. " This Basic Education links the children, whether of the cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India. It develops both the body and the mind, and keeps the child rooted to the soil, with a glorious vision of the future in the realization of which he or she begins to take his or her share, from the very commencement of his or her career in school." (*Constructive Programme*, p. 16)

By means of this education the children are taught how they can attain knowledge through handicrafts. Along with attainment of knowledge, they become proficient in the means of production, and their knowledge is, by becoming related to the work of their hands increased and strengthened.

**Adult Education**

Although the Britishers ruled India for 150 years, the type of education which prevailed was such, that except for a very negligible percentage of people who were called literate, others were so illiterate that they could not even sign their own names. This is why Gandhiji tackled the question of adult education side by side with that of children's education. He wrote, " If I had charge of adult education, I should begin with opening the minds of the adult pupils to the greatness and vastness of their country. The villager's India is contained in his village. If he goes

to another village, he talks of his own village as his home. Hindustan is for him a geographical term. We have no notion of the ignorance prevailing in the villages. My Adult Education means, therefore, first, true political education of the adult by word of mouth. Side by side with this education by the mouth will be the literary education." (*Constructive Programme*, pp. 16-17)

**Rashtra Bhasha (National Language)**

On the subject of language Gandhiji wrote:

"Our love of the English language, in preference to our own mother tongue, has caused a deep chasm between the educated and politically-minded classes and the masses. The languages of India have suffered impoverishment. We flounder when we make the vain attempt to express abstruse thought in the mother tongue. There are no equivalents for scientific terms. The result has been disastrous. The masses remain cut off from the modern mind.

"For all-India intercourse, we need, from among the Indian stock, a language which the largest number of people already know and understand, and which the others can easily pick up. This language is indisputably Hindi. It is spoken and understood by both Hindus and Muslims of the North. It is called Urdu when it is written in the Urdu character." (*Constructive Programme*, pp. 19-20)

Gandhiji firmly believed that Indians should learn both the scripts.

**Love of One's Own Language**

Along with Rashtra Bhasha, he strongly advocated learning the language of one's own province, and improving it.

**4. Harijan Sevak Sangh**

Through the means of this Association Bapuji gave warning to the orthodox Sanatanists that the existence of untouchability and the idea of high and low were shaking the very foundations of Hindu society. If the injustice which had been perpetrated on Harijans throughout the

centuries was not removed, the Hindu religion was doomed. He believed that by serving the Harijans, the Savarnas (higher castes) were not doing them any special favour, but, instead, were doing penance for their injustice of centuries.

He took five rupees for his autograph, and wherever he went he stretched out his hand and collected money even in pies and all this money was spent, through this Sangh, for Harijan welfare. By these means he collected lakhs of rupees for the Harijan cause.

### 5. Go Seva Sangh

Gandhiji created this Sangh, because he was deeply stirred by the pitiable condition of the cattle of India. Through this Sangh, he pointed out to our people how good and healthy milch cows could be had, how strong and handsome bullocks could be bred, and how, through them, cultivation could be improved. He also pointed out how the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, and grain could be increased. He was so pained by the inhuman Phooka system of extracting milk, used by the Calcutta milkmen that he altogether gave up taking buffalo's and cow's milk. He never used footwear made out of the leather of slaughtered cattle, but only of that of animals which had died a natural death.

Besides the work of the Sanghas, a few more items of his constructive programme are given below, to show the methodical way in which he worked.

### 1. Communal Unity

No other Indian leader had given so much importance to communal unity, for the progress of the country, as Gandhiji did. He did not stress its importance only for political purposes where its advantage could be readily realized. By unity he meant, the unity of hearts, which could not be disunited ; and which should be established between the followers of every religion, caste and creed for the betterment of society and the country.

### 2. Economic Equality

His views on this were: "Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich, in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility as long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India, in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day, unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches, and the power that riches give, and sharing them for the common good.

"I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship, in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is non-violence. But we made up our minds, in 1920, to negotiate that steep ascent. We have found it worth the effort....

"Congressmen should ask themselves how the existing inequalities can be abolished, violently, or non-violently. I think we know the violent way. It has not succeeded anywhere. Since non-violence is a process of conversion, the conversion, if achieved, must be permanent. A society, or a nation, constructed non-violently must be able to withstand attacks upon its structure from without or within." (*Constructive Programme*, pp. 20-21)

### 3. Kisans

Gandhiji considered the Kisans the real wealth of the country. They form 80 per cent of our population, and live in seven million villages. His first political act after his return to India from South Africa was to lead an agitation among the Kisans of Bihar. Gandhiji did not consider the method of work, used by some outsiders among the villagers, as non-violent. He was of the opinion that thereby these had harmed them. For the awakening of the

Kisans he started his activities in Champaran, Kheda, Bardoli and Borsad. He stressed that the Kisans must not be used as tools for one's own party ends but should be served in their own interests.

### 4. Labour Class

In order to bridge the gulf between mill-owners and labourers, and to avoid daily class clashes, Bapu advocated the non-violent method of arbitration. In his opinion, strike or *hartal* was to be the last measure for settling disputes. He believed that if mill-owners and labourers submitted their disputes to arbitration, there would be the least need for *hartal*. After showing how Kisans can be organized on a non-violent basis, he organized the labourers of Ahmedabad mills on similar lines. In fact, there is no parallel to the Labour Union of Ahmedabad in the whole country.

### 5. Students

Gandhiji had a soft corner in his heart for students. Experience proved to Gandhiji that the education which was imparted to students had played an important part in keeping us slaves. This is why he put before the country his new method of Basic Education. His instructions for students were as follows :

a. Students must not take part in party politics. They are students and searchers, not politicians.

b. They may not resort to political strikes.

c. They must all do sacrificial spinning in a scientific manner.

d. They will be Khadi-users all through and use village products to the exclusion of all analogous things, foreign or machine-made.

e. They will make it a point to give first-aid to their injured neighbours, and do, scavenging and cleaning, in the neighbouring villages, and instruct village children and adults.

f. They will learn the national language, Hindustani, in its present double dress, two forms of speech and two scripts, so that they may feel at home whether Hindi or Urdu is spoken, and Nagari or Urdu script is written.

g. They will translate into their own mother tongue everything new they may learn, and transmit it in their weekly rounds to the surrounding villages.

h. They will do nothing in secret. They will be above board in all their dealings. They will lead a pure life of self-restraint, shed all fear and be always ready to protect their weak fellow-students, and be ready to quell riots by non-violent conduct at the risk of their lives.

i. They will be scrupulously correct and chivalrous in their behaviour towards their girl fellow-students. (*Constructive Programme*, pp. 26-27)

### 6. Women

"Woman must be the true helpmate of man in the mission of service. Woman has been suppressed under custom and law for which man was responsible, and in the shaping of which she had no hand. In a plan of life based on non-violence, woman has as much right to shape her own destiny, as man has to shape his. But as every right in a non-violent society proceeds from a previous performance of a duty, it follows that rules of social conduct must be framed by mutual co-operation and consultation. They can never be imposed from outside. Men have not realized this truth in its fulness in their behaviour towards women. They have considered themselves to be lords and masters of women, instead of considering women as their friends and co-workers. Women are in the position somewhat of the slave of old, who did not know that he could or ever had to be free. And when freedom came, for the moment he felt helpless. Women have been taught to regard themselves as slaves of men. Wives should not be dolls and objects of indulgence, but

should be treated as honoured comrades in common service. To this end, those who have not received a liberal education, should receive such instruction as is possible from their husbands." (*Constructive Programme*, pp. 17-18)

He also said woman should not be afraid of wicked men. Nobody can dare violate the chastity of a woman without her consent. She knows how to die, and she understands what God is. Under these circumstances, the wicked will bow to her.

### 7. Adivasis and Criminal Tribes

In his non-violent society, Gandhiji had a place for such backward people. Once, in this connection he wrote: "Our country is so vast and the races so varied that the best of us cannot know all there is to know of men and their condition. As one discovers this for oneself, one realizes how difficult it is to make good our claim to be one nation, unless every unit has a living consciousness of being one with every other." (*Constructive Programme*, p. 24)

These Adivasis have descended to a state of slavery. They are submitted to forced labour. They are very ignorant. To improve their lot is an indispensable part of national service. It is our bounden duty to improve their condition and make them a part of our society.

### 8. Prohibition

"Prohibition of all intoxicants and narcotics is very vital for social and moral reform", wrote Gandhiji. "Prohibition has been on the Congress programme since 1920. In the Satyagraha Movement, thousands of men and women courted arrest, while picketing liquor shops." At another place he said, "If we are to reach our goal through non-violent effort, we may not leave to the future government the fate of lakhs of men and women who are labouring under the curse of intoxicants and narcotics." (*Constructive Programme*, p. 10). His idea was that labourers should so occupy themselves that the desire for this deep-rooted evil is slowly eradicated from their lives.

## 9. Service of Lepers

Leprosy is extensively found in India. Whereas in other countries, missionaries serve this part of society with great love and zeal, here in India, these unfortunate people are looked down upon. Gandhiji paid attention to them too. He personally served them in South Africa and in India, and included service of lepers in his eighteen-point programme.

After explaining his eighteen-fold constructive programme in detail, Gandhiji said:

"The workers should fully understand that this constructive programme is the truthful and non-violent way to achieve complete independence. The progress of this programme is by itself complete independence. The aim of this constructive programme is to shape the nation from its very foundation upwards.

"It would be more appropriate to call the constructive programme the shaping of the nation for complete independence through truthful and non-violent means. We have had a very painful experience of the way of seeking to maintain independence through violent means. Just look at the loss of money, life, and truth in the present war. From my point of view the meaning of complete independence through truth and non-violence is the liberation of all parts of the nation, where the poorest of the poor would have complete independence without any discrimination of colour (black or white), and religion. The foundation of such a Swaraj cannot be selfishness or autocracy. Therefore, it is in perfect consonance with the ideal of mutual co-operation and mutual dependence.

"The way of non-violence is, no doubt, easy in some ways, but it is also very difficult in many other ways. It touches the life of every Indian, and makes him alert. The strength which is dormant in him awakens, and is thereby revitalized."

In his opinion, to fight a war, soldiers were very necessary, but to collect war material was even more necessary.

Soldiers were useless without war material. Even soldiers were not made without some effort. They had to have military training. Therefore, just as in a violent society, an army and unlimited war material were essential, similarly, for a non-violent society there was need for Satyagrahis, and a complete constructive programme. We would not be able to reach our goal without adopting such a constructive programme. Otherwise, in case we achieved independence, we would not be able to retain it. This is the reason why Bapu kept himself busy with the constructive programme right up to his last moment, and always stressed the need for us to follow it.

Gandhiji had studied Indian history with great care, and had found the secret of the success of the British in this country. He knew that although the rulers of India had changed often, still the degradation which the country suffered during British rule was greater than ever before. The reason for this was that no other ruler, prior to the British, had succeeded in destroying the Panchayat rule prevailing in this country. Because of Panchayats our people had always been self-reliant and self-sufficient. The British Government destroyed this marvellous Panchayat system, and made the villages subservient to the Centre. Gandhiji wanted to revive Panchayat rule through his constructive programme, and thereby wanted to run the Government from below, and not from above; he wanted to lay the foundation of Swaraj so deep that no power on earth, howsoever violent, could snatch away the independence of India. Giving a picture of Village Swaraj he said :

" My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops, and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding Ganja,

tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring a clean supply. This can be done through controlled wells and tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible, every activity will be conducted on a co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected, by rotation, from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic today without much interference, even from the present Government whose sole effective connection with the villages is the exaction of the village revenue. I have not here examined the question of relations with the neighbouring villages, and the Centre, if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here, there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour." (*Harijan*, 26-7-'42, p. 238)

## XX

## GANDHIJI'S VARIOUS SPHERES OF ACTIVITY

As we have already observed, Gandhiji's activity was not limited to politics alone. His interests were many, and covered all aspects of daily living in every walk of life. Whichever field of work he tackled, he revolutionized.

He possessed a certain magnetic force which even attracted his opponents towards him. Bapu's unlimited love for humanity made each person, who came into contact with him, feel that the love which Gandhiji had for him had no parallel. This charming habit of the Mahatma's made each one believe he was especial and favoured.

Gandhiji was a man of tender speech, keen intellect, vast knowledge and unequalled experience. A fact worth noting, and one which is in conformity with the findings of eminent psychologists is that all his mental faculties continued to develop till his very last day. It was comparatively easy for him to find a solution for the hardest problem. He seemed to enjoy overcoming difficulties. The words " impossible ' and " impracticable " were not to be found in his dictionary. He was completely fearless. His vision was so keen that he could foretell the trend of future events with uncanny accuracy. Problems which baffled intellectuals and industrial giants failed to daze Bapuji. He put forth suggestions for solving them quite easily. He did not lose either his poise or equanimity even in the most trying of circumstances.

Life to him was a sport. He was always merry and smiling, and pleasant sound of laughter constantly came out of his room. Bapu had a fine sense of humour, and could even impart a reprimand in a humorous way, and this was not only taken to heart, but much appreciated ! His mind was ever fresh. His body bore the marks of wear and tear but not his mental faculties. At the ripe age of 79, his mind was keener than that of younger men. He had

great control over his body, mind and speech. Gandhiji made no difference between man and woman for he felt that both sexes were equal, and that each had a special part to play in the ordained scheme of things. Though he was gentle and soft-hearted, yet where his principles were concerned, he was firm. His heart was as wide as the sea and everybody's misery created a ripple in it. He considered other people's troubles as his own, and always tried to overcome them. Greed and egoism he had none. Though he had a lean, thin body his hands and fingers had a steel-like strength. Even a pat on the back caused a little pain, if it was administered by him. In his opinion idleness was a sin, so he was never idle, nor did he permit others to sit idle.

He had control over the amount of sleep he allowed himself. Surrounded by stacks of papers and important matters needing his attention, he would snatch a few moments for a cat nap and would immediately fall into a sound sleep within these few seconds, and yet would wake up in time to attend to his pressing work and keep his appointments. Sometimes we got anxious, as the appointed time drew near, but he always managed to get up just at the nick of time to attend to his work. He usually slept soundly during train journeys, inspite of great noise at stations and wayside stops. When he travelled by car he would go to sleep like a child no sooner was it in motion.

He was very fond of children, and always made friends with them. When he made grimaces, and joked with children, one could not help laughing. Visitors seeing him hanging on to the shoulders of Abha and Manu, and being carried by them, used to burst into a hearty laugh.

Bapuji was a Karmayogi of the highest order. If anybody wants to truly achieve the state of Karmayoga according to the Bhagavadgita, he should make a study of Gandhiji's life, which was Karmayoga personified. He wanted to be a seeker after Truth, with a proper understanding of all matters pertaining to life, and hence every thought and act of his was directed towards this goal. The

Gita was a book of guidance for him ; passages from it were daily recited to him. But he gave even more importance to the first Mantra of the Isha Upanishad than to the Gita. He firmly believed that if all the sacred books of the Hindu religion, barring this particular Mantra, had been destroyed the Hindu Dharma would still lose nothing. He was equally fond of the Tulsidas Ramayana, which he occasionally read. He was enamoured of Rama's life, and that is why he used to compare his idea of Swaraj with that of Ramarajya. He also enjoyed listening to the Bhagavat Purana which was read out to him from time to time. He had imbibed valuable doctrines from the sacred books of most religions, and had studied almost all the great religions of the world.

Bapuji never had a special Guru of his own though he always maintained that he was looking for one. But he considered Shri G .K. Gokhale his political Guru (teacher). Shri Raychandbhai also influenced him to a great extent.

Once, a Japanese came to see Gandhiji, and presented him with a china clay toy. This trifle had three monkeys sitting together, the first with eyes shut, the second with ears shut, and the third with mouth shut. These monkeys always accompanied Bapuji, and were placed on his desk wherever he went. Bapuji considered these monkeys his teachers. Affectionately pointing towards them he would say, 'Don't see evil in anybody, and that which is not worth seeing. Whatever you see, see with an open mind, and don't insist on seeing everything.' This lesson can be learnt from the monkey with the shut eyes. 'Don't listen to any slander ; always listen to good things ; listen to the name of God ; don't insist on listening to everything and don't listen to evil things.' This lesson is well-illustrated by the monkey with its ears shut. The third monkey teaches us to speak what is true and beneficial and to remain silent, and beware of speaking too much.

Bapuji placed equal importance on prayer and bodily labour. According to him the mind should always be thinking of God, and the hands engaged in His service. Acting on this belief, he always kept himself well-occupied, and

never sat idle. He considered everything he did as service to the Almighty. Whenever his blessings were sought, he was fond of saying that all good acts had his blessings.

Nobody ever stressed the value of bodily labour as much as Bapuji. When he was in jail in South Africa he cleaned the lavatory, a thing hitherto unheard of amongst 'upper caste' people. He thereby gave the same status to the work of a sweeper as that of any 'high caste' man. He thus lifted the work of a sweeper out of its lowly and menial rank, and made it as self-respecting as any other. Ashramites were expected to do the scavenging work themselves, and hence new methods of scavenging were introduced in the Ashram, so that the work could be done without dirtying oneself. Bapu's commode looked as clean as a piece of furniture. When put in his room, and covered with a teapoy cloth no one thought it was a commode. Bapu was clever about it. He facetiously called his lavatory his "library", since he utilized his time in it, in reading.

He had also learnt the work of a cobbler, and could make chappals. In jail, he gave for record purposes his occupation as weaver. He preferred to do all his work himself. He had some knowledge and skill in the work of a tailor and a cook too. "One does not degrade himself by performing manual labour, but one raises himself in the estimation of others", was the lesson he taught by example. He never advised others to do what he had not done himself.

Mahatma Gandhi had a passion for cleanliness—almost to the point of being finicky. My first opportunity of observing him at close quarters came when I accompanied him on a visit to a certain town. I was entrusted with the task of serving him his meals. I carried goat's milk in a glass, which had just been washed, but not wiped, and placed it on his desk, and thought no further about the matter. The result was that when Bapu picked up the glass from the desk to drink the milk, he found the desk spotted with milk and water stains, and the varnish spoiled. He was very annoyed, and gave me my first lesson in

cleanliness, neatness, and the care of other people's property! I was much abashed. Bapu disliked dirt and disorder to such an extent that even a tiny spot did not escape his eagle eye. Whilst eating, if perchance anything fell on his clothes, he would immediately change, and send the soiled garment to me for washing. If an oil spot was found on his pillow case, he would at once get it laundered. Though the Mahatma's clothes were never sent either to a Dhobi (washerman) or to a laundry, but were always washed with home-made soap on the premises, yet they always looked immaculate. If his bath tub was not cleaned properly he at once noticed it, and scolded the person concerned. Whilst handing him his hot water for shaving, if my thumb accidently was found touching the inner side of the glass he commented on it and explained that it was an insanitary habit, since the dirt on the finger and under the nail would be absorbed by the hot water and thereby pollute it. If ever the bottom of the cork of his water-bottle came in contact with his hands, he pointed out that this too was not sanitary and would ask me to get the cork washed again before corking. Gandhiji was a strict disciplinarian, but none of us who worked with him resented his firmness, because we realized that he taught us really worthwhile lessons. He always wiped his feet with a duster after his daily walks before taking his seat. His body shone like varnished gold though he never used soap. He just rubbed his wet body briskly with a towel. While in the tub he had a shave without the aid of soap, brush or mirror. He always maintained that a clean and pure mind can live only in a clean body. That "cleanliness was next to godliness" was proved by his daily living habits.

Hardly any other man so famous and so saintly had ever lived a life as simple as that of Bapu's. In him cleanliness and stark simplicity were both beautifully combined. His needs were few, and he never felt troubled by the lack of any material article.

Once, he was touring Orissa. There he saw a woman clad in very ragged and dirty clothes. Gandhiji said that he

could understand a person being poor, but could not understand why she should be so dirty. Why did not the woman wash her clothes and change them ? But he was told that the woman had no change of clothes. She had only one piece of cloth which she had wrapped around her body. She took Ba inside her hovel and showed all her meagre belongings and asked how she could possibly change her garment in order to wash it ? When this was told to Bapuji, he was greatly distressed. Though he was aware of India's poverty, yet he had no idea, till now, that it was quite so desperate. From now on he decided to wear his Dhoti upto his knees and gave up wearing a shirt. In its place he covered himself with a Chaddar. This was to save cloth, and set others an example to do the same, in order that those who needed it badly could buy it.

Nothing was worthless to Bapuji. A tiny scrap of paper, a pin, a little handkerchief — all had some value for him, and he never wantonly threw away anything or wasted it. No one dared misplace or lose his things. He spared nobody till the article he was looking for was discovered, or until the cause of the loss or the misplacement was found. Once, he was in the process of reading a Hindi book, when he found its outer cover missing. The man who generally used to clean his room mistook it as a worthless scrape paper and threw it into waste paper basket. When I entered the room, I found everybody looking rather uncomfortable, and the man, who was responsible for the loss, standing like a culprit. On enquiry, I was told that the cover of such and such a book was missing, and that it had to be recovered. We all felt that unless we got it back, none of us would feel at ease. If ever his handkerchief, or his small bit of pencil got misplaced or lost, this mishap was not less noteworthy than more important matters. At one time, when he was living in Maganwadi, he picked up a cake of soap spoilt by lying in water, and took the Ashramites to task. For half an hour, he lectured that they had no business to waste things in that manner, when their country was so poor, and they were expected to lead a life of thrift and frugality. Usually, he wrote his

discourses on the reverse side of used envelopes and telegrams, and would make use of even a tiny scrap of blank paper. He discovered a new and novel method of protecting himself from the cold by using newspapers under his covering sheet. He made his pin-cushion out of the waste yarn from his spinning. Once, his typist purchased some new files; they were immediately returned, and wads of newspapers were used for the purpose!

He was very particular. His things could not be changed without his permission. Even if the old cloth used for keeping the mud plaster on his abdomen was changed, it did not escape his notice. If his towel was changed, the reason for the change had to be explained. If there was to be some difference in his utensils, the change could be made only after first informing him. If his water-bottle broke, it was necessary to tell him how the mishap occurred. Even if the towel used for cleaning his feet after ghee had been applied and massaged into the skin was changed, it was expected that the matter would be explained to him. No matter was too trifling for Bapu's attention. He took an interest in everything.

An iron basin was presented to him on his release from the Yeravda Jail. It served him as wash-basin till his last day. The brass spittoon which he always used and which fell to the ground when the assassin attacked had been with him for over a decade. His heavy tumbler of brass and wooden spoon had accompanied him to several jails. Who knows on how many journeys his walking stick had accompanied him? The watch, presented to him by Indira Nehru, continued to hang from his girdle string till the day it was finally stolen.

There is an interesting story behind this watch. In 1930, when Bapuji stayed at Anand Bhawan at Allahabad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru presented this watch to him. It belonged to his daughter Indira, who later became Mrs. Feroze Gandhi. It remained with him from then onwards for a period of fifteen years. In 1946 he was on his way to Delhi from Patna. As usual, he was busy working in the compartment, and the watch was lying by his side.

When the train stopped at a wayside station he came out to give Darshan to the crowd. When he returned to his seat he found the watch missing. A report appeared in the Press about this theft, but it was never returned by the person who stole it. Most probably the "gentleman" thief intended to keep it as a memento of Gandhiji! This incident was also published in the foreign Press, and a watch was sent to him by a British manufacturer, but it proved to be of a very inferior quality, and did not give good service. I exchanged this watch with mine, but unfortunately mine had neither alarm or radium dial; thus it too was not of much use to him. Finally, the same manufacturer from whom Indira Gandhi had purchased her watch presented him with a new and good one. This Bapu used till his death.

His rosary and his alarm-watch were placed under his pillow everyday. Each Monday, the day of his weekly silence, a small pad called "the pad of silence", and a pencil were also put near his pillow, as he used to answer questions and transact all business on that day, only through the medium of writing. Such "Monday" chits which were brief and to the point must still be in the possession of his companions in large numbers.

When he was touring Noakhali, a hat made of cocoanut leaves was presented to him, costing not more than half an anna. He used to wear it whilst sitting in the sun and was never tired of praising its usefulness.

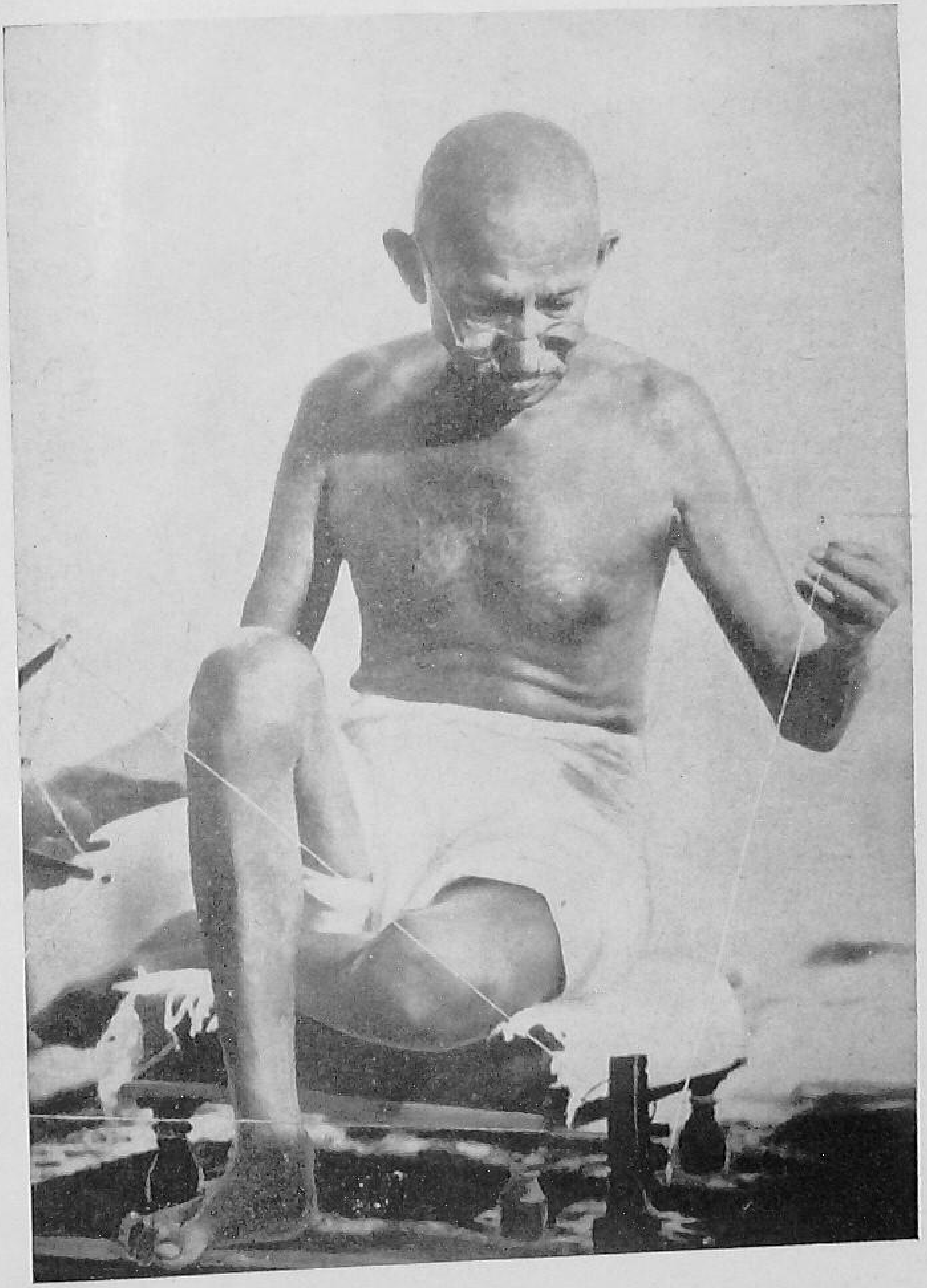
He would not get another pair of wooden sandals till the one he was using wore out. When his leather chappals began to give way in places, he always preferred to get them repaired time and again — rather than to buy a new pair. He would not spare valuable time even to have his hair cut; one of his companions would have to trim it — to the best of his ability — while he sat and wiped his feet after his daily morning walk. He cut and cleaned his nails whilst engaged in discussions, as he had no spare time for such small things. He had given up using a fountain pen; if, by mistake, I or others gave him one to use in signing his name for an autograph-seeker he refused to sign with it, and would use his reed pen instead. He had a very

small ink-pot. When travelling, the ink-pot would be emptied, its ink poured into some small, available bottle and the same was again poured back into the ink-pot, when it reached the destination. He had a small hollow bamboo Kalamdan or pen-case in which all his pens, pencils, knife, pair of scissors, and other little articles of daily use were kept. This case was put into a Khadi bag which was called his 'office', and it always accompanied him on his travels. This bag also contained all his important papers and books, together with writing materials; the Bhagavad-gita, *Ashram Bhajanavali*, and a dictionary were usually taken along. During his tours everything else could be left behind as far as Bapu was concerned, but this bag, whether he travelled by rail or motor car had always to accompany him, and received first priority when packing his luggage. As soon as he got into the car or train, he immediately began working. He did most of his writing work whilst travelling, and jerks and jolts did not hamper him for he had learnt the trick of writing when in motion. When his right hand got tired, he wrote with his left. The best time for reading he got in his 'library' i.e. his closet, for this was almost the only time when he was undisturbed.

He observed two fasts regularly every year, one on April 6th at the commencement of the National Week, and the other on April 13th to commemorate the Jallianwala Bagh Day. Each of these fasts lasted a full 24 hours.

His birthday was celebrated twice each year. Once, according to the Hindu calendar, on Ashwin Krishna Dwadashi, which he named Charkha Dwadashi and the other according to the English calendar on the 2nd October. On both these days he changed his clothes and got new ones. This he did only to please his companions who presented him with clothes of their own hand-spun yarn. Whenever I presented him with cloth made from my hand-spun yarn I took the old one of the previous year in exchange for the new. A few of these clothes remain with me as tokens in his memory.

Spinning was a daily routine with him. Even during his fasts, he would not give it up till he had no strength



Bapu at his favourite occupation

left to sit at it. When ill, he would still sit at his Charkha till he could no longer do so. He learnt to spin with both his hands, though this is no easy matter.

Bapuji had made eating a matter of science. In this connection he always had one experiment or the other up his sleeve. He believed that eating was to satisfy hunger, and not the palate. To save time in cooking and also to improve health he made several experiments with uncooked food. He had altogether given up taking condiments, and even gave up taking salt every now and again. Raw or boiled vegetables, bread, which he also gave up from time to time, and goat's milk were his normal diet. Besides this, he took hot water with lemon and honey, and to conserve energy he took jaggery. His body acted like a thermometer. Any little change had its effect on him. He regarded a clean tongue as a sign of health. If his was found coated even a little bit, he at once made a change in his diet, and if found still coated, he took an enema or a caster-oil purgative. To him clean bowels were of the utmost importance. He was of the opinion that every disease had its root in unclean bowels. The item for which he spared the most time was for his meals. Whatever he ate, he masticated thoroughly before swallowing, and thus did not place an undue burden on his stomach. He made a fine art of the physical process of eating. While making experiments with various diets, he risked his life on several occasions. Once, by taking too many groundnuts, and at another time by taking too much of raw vegetables he was taken so seriously ill that his life was in danger. His weight continued steady over the years and he did not allow it to increase.

Sometimes it so happened that he gave an interview while he was having a meal, and a whole hour would pass, but still he would not have finished eating, because he had to do a lot of talking as well. Often, in disgust he would leave his meal unfinished, and wash his hands. In order to avoid such a thing happening often, he took liquid diet on the days he was very busy.

He always used boiled water, which was cooled, filled in a bottle, and placed by his side. He also used this water for cleaning his mouth. Though he used hot water for his bath all the year round, yet he always insisted on washing his face in cold water. In the hot season his bottle was covered with a wet cloth, or was put in ice, but he never used ice in his drinking water. Mud plaster was applied to his abdomen daily. It gave him much relief and helped his digestion.

Mustard oil, or olive oil, mixed with lemon juice was used for his massage. He would not throw away the squeezed lemon peels but would rub them into his scalp and on his body.

He never used a tooth-brush, for he had lost his teeth, and used artificial teeth at meal times. He cleaned them himself. Early in the morning he freshened his mouth with tooth powder and a twig of Babool. Each night a fresh and well-pounded twig was put in his brass glass in water near his bed, and tooth powder was put in a small bottle. The tooth powder was prepared from burnt almond shells mixed with salt. A bottle of water, a basin and a chamber pot were placed near his bed.

Bapuji had immense faith in nature cure. Of course his favourite panacea for all ills was Ramanama. To him, if one had complete faith in Rama he needed no other medicine. Next to Ramanama, he believed in the efficacy of air, water, earth, and sunshine — the other four " medicines " ! He considered ordinary mud as beneficial to a human as mother's milk. Once, he had a pimple on his chin to which also he applied mud plaster. On another occasion, when he was eating, a kite pounced on his food and injured his thumb, and it bled. For this too he applied mud plaster. Whether it was a wound or a boil, mud was the invariable treatment used by Gandhiji, though modern doctors raise their hands in horror at the very thought. Think of the germs !

He gave equal importance to water treatment. One day, while he was getting out of his car, I shut the door

without first making sure that his hand was away from the door, and two of his fingers got jammed, and were badly injured. The pain was so severe that he fainted. When he regained consciousness he at once plunged his fingers into cold water. Others asked him to apply tincture, or to take some other treatment, but he persisted in his water cure, and after a little while he started attending to his work. On my return I felt very dejected because of the needless suffering I had caused through being so careless. He noticed my low spirits, and started cheering me up, and told me not to worry about what had happened.

He was, likewise, a worshipper of the Sun. In winter, he spent the whole of each day sitting in the beneficial sunshine. It was literally the very breath of his life. However cold it might be, he always insisted that all the doors to his room should be wide open. There was a door on the side where I used to sleep. I had to keep it open, in order to let the air blow in. In the room where he generally took his massage, two heaters were put on to warm it, but yet the windows were always left open. In the bitterly cold months of December and January, he walked bare-footed with only a warm shawl on. He enjoyed sleeping under the open sky, as if he wanted to converse with the stars, and did it in spite of the fact that his doctors had advised him not to sleep in the open, due to his high blood pressure.

He always sat erect. He thought it injurious to one's health to sit with the back bent. If he saw anybody sitting in a hunched-up position, he immediately told him to straighten up. He placed a wooden plank behind his back to be able to sit erect.

Owing to his advanced age and poor circulation his body and feet often became cold. To stimulate the flow of blood, he usually took some light exercise before going to bed.

He took morning and evening walks, each for half an hour, almost religiously. It so happened that sometimes it was nine or even ten o'clock at night before he was able

to finish his work. But still he went out for his constitutional. This is one of the reasons why he remained so healthy. At times he walked so fast that much younger people lagged behind.

Once a thing was introduced into his daily life, it was not easily given up, unless there was sufficient cause to do so. On one occasion, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru told him that if he would rise on his toes, and stretch all his limbs, and then return to normal position, and do this several times, he would feel much refreshed. Bapuji was impressed, and introduced this exercise into his daily routine from that very day. Before going to bed he took this exercise half a dozen times while supporting himself on Manu's and Abha's shoulders.

Bapuji was extremely solicitous regarding everybody's feelings, and did not like anyone to feel hurt or slighted. At night, when he lay on his bed, Abha, Sushila, Mirabahen, and other companions would take turns to massage his feet thus relaxing and soothing him. Sometimes Lakshmibahen and I would also have an opportunity of rendering him this slight service. Manu applied oil to his head. In the winter of 1948 a new cotton quilt was made for him, and I took a thick woollen blanket as a gift for him. The question now was, which one should be used ? He decided that he would use both alternately. A few days after I noticed that the cotton quilt was placed daily for his use, and my gift of the woollen blanket was put aside. Of course, I did not say a word, as his choice was my choice. But one day I overheard him saying to the girls, " Brij Krishna must be feeling bad, as he brought the woollen blanket for me, and I have ceased using it." From then on the cotton quilt was put aside, and he began to use my blanket once again. This little incident is an example of his consideration for others.

I used to sleep near him. For two nights I was so busy with work that it was midnight before I went to bed. I approached my bed slowly and carefully without making any noise, lest his sleep be disturbed, but somehow he sensed my approach. Early next morning, he asked me why I was so late ? Bapu used to tell me to retire at a

reasonable hour. He took care of everybody's meals, sleep and rest, so that if anybody fell ill, that person felt he had to be more careful of his health for the sake of Bapu than for his own. Falling ill meant one more item for Gandhiji to attend to in his already heavy daily programme. He had to be kept fully informed about the patient — what medicine was prescribed, what food was given, how he felt etc. Unless he was acquainted with all these details he was not satisfied. He never failed to call on the patient at least once daily. If a friend living outside fell ill, he would go to see him at his house. Once, Shri Kidwai fell out of his car, and his hand was fractured; he immediately went to enquire about his condition at his hotel. Likewise, he went to see Dr. Rajendra Prasad at his house, and Horace Alexander at the hospital. Somehow he always managed to find time to see those who were ill. Gandhiji was one of the most thoughtful and considerate of men it has been my privilege to know, and this was the more admirable since he was such a great, international figure.

His life was an open book. He held nothing of his own as private. He divulged the most secret things to his companions. I would ask him any question I wanted and he did not mind telling me all he could. During his last days, he used to take me to the Governor General's House and would later tell me the nature of the discussions they had. I was allowed to read his letters, telegrams, and all other correspondence. He never doubted me. The amount of attention he paid to my health was almost more than a mother could pay. How can I describe his immeasurable love?

Bapuji never started by suspecting a person. Many people deceived him, but he continued to trust them. It was his firm conviction that every person possessed good and bad qualities. Everybody, therefore, should be provided with equal opportunities for his betterment. A day must come when the sinner is sure to admit his errors and feel sorry for them. He did not believe in punishing offenders.

In his opinion, real punishment lay in feeling repentant. To him, true repentance consisted in not repeating the same error.

Bapuji acknowledged his smallest mistake the moment he realized he had made one, and never hesitated to confess it publicly. Several times, during his Satyagraha movements he described his mistakes as "Himalayan" blunders. He also never hesitated to point out publicly the mistakes of his companions. This quality which was the result of his strict adherence to truth, was not to be found in any other leader.

Once I wrote to him that people had become very critical of him and abused him. In reply he said :

"I do not mind being abused. There is an advantage in it, which is that my defects will be removed. I would much rather be abused, than that people should worship me but not follow me. Worshippers are useless because they never themselves do what they admire. Those who abuse feel in their hearts that I am evil, but when their prejudice is removed then they will follow my principles."

Wardha, 20-8-'35

From the day his feet once again touched Indian soil in 1915 after his sojourn in South Africa, he was constantly engaged in the betterment of his countrymen till the day of his death. No other leader or great personality had travelled this vast country as extensively as had Gandhiji. He travelled from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, and from Karachi to Burma, not once, but several times and visited a number of places more than once. Wherever the marks of his feet were imprinted, that part became sanctified. In Pandit Jawaharlal's words, "Wherever he sat, that place became a temple, and wherever his feet touched the ground, that place became holy." He usually travelled third class, and made two tours barefooted — in Orissa and in Noakhali. He sacrificed everything for the sake of his country, and bore innumerable hardships for it. Fourteen times he suffered imprisonment, and he undertook eighteen fasts.

On three separate occasions, he fasted, each time, for three continuous weeks. Only those who had the privilege of nursing him could properly understand the extent of his suffering during his fasts. His doctors were confounded, and wondered how he pulled through them, but as Bapu had unlimited faith in his Maker, he was the only one who was free from anxiety. He always kept saying that till God wanted him, nothing on earth could harm him.

Gandhiji kept as few companions with him as possible, especially during his tours. Once he started on a tour with only Mahadevbhai as his companion. In Noakhali, he sent all his companions to different centres to work and himself began to tour bare-footed. But he well knew the art of moulding clay into gold. Wherever he went he drew workers and admirers. As all of us know it is not an easy thing to exact work from new and untried hands particularly when one is not acquainted with the abilities and habits of the newcomers. But Gandhiji entrusted the most responsible of jobs to even an ordinary villager. Considering the vast amount of work the Mahatma had, people thought that he probably had a very big office staff with a number of secretaries and typists. Few imagined that his only helpers were other Shiva Bharatis like himself. As he preferred to do a great deal of his work himself, he depended as little as possible on others. This principle he maintained throughout his life.

He received crores of rupees for charitable purposes, but not a pie was unaccounted for, and the funds were never misappropriated. He had no equal in keeping accounts. He was an ideal trustee. He spent even a pie only after due consideration, as he thought that all the money in his charge was public money and he was responsible in accounting for it. His work was never hampered due to lack of funds. He said that if a worker possessed honesty of purpose and zeal for work, money would automatically pour in. Once I asked him why he accepted funds from speculators. He replied, "I don't find any difference whether money is obtained from liquor dealers or

from gamblers. I have taken plenty of charity from liquor dealers; even prostitutes have contributed. Whose to refuse, and whose to accept is the question. Of course, I refused to accept Rs 12,000/- from Goharjan, as she wanted me to go to her place to hear her singing. But the Ali Brothers went, and accepted the money. Tell me, what can be done now? Strange is the puzzle of Dharma."

He seldom broke his engagements, and somehow found time for everything. His life, from the beginning, was well-organized and well-ordered.

In his sixty years of public life Gandhiji must have written thousands of letters and articles, which, if collected, would cover several volumes. I alone possess 158 letters, out of which 150 are in his own hand. His daily post was a bagful. There was hardly a big city in the whole world from where he had not received a letter. He had admirers and acquaintances all over the world. Inspite of his unending engagements, he seldom delayed in replying, and, generally, he replied in his own hand.

He was very particular about postal hours. No sooner did he arrive at a new place, than he enquired about the hours of delivery and clearance, and was very particular about despatching the mail in time. The day fixed for despatching the matter for his weeklies was considered an eventful day, almost as if a storm was brewing. He was constantly kept informed as to how much matter was ready. If there was paucity of matter, he would make up the lack himself. He considered it just as important that his weeklies appeared in time as he considered the attainment of Swaraj by India. Inspite of his frequent and extensive tours, his weeklies always appeared in time. He was a journalist of the first rank, and was well aware of the vital importance of the time factor and topicality of subject-matter. The timings of incoming and outgoing Wardha and Ahmedabad trains were known to him.

He never took advertisements for his papers. He believed that if the public liked his ideas, and felt the desire

to read about them and to put them into practice, they themselves would buy the papers in such numbers that all the expenses of production and printing would be met without any difficulty. But if the public did not approve of his ideas for the welfare and development of this country, then he had no business to become a burden on them. The number of his subscribers kept fluctuating. So he was able to gauge changes in public opinion from the sales of his weeklies. Once, the number of subscribers to the *Harijan* had reached the sixty thousand mark !

Bapuji had given the Indian public food for thought through his weeklies, *Young India* and *Navajivan* in the first decade, and *Harijan, Harijan Bandhu* and *Harijan Sevak* in the last two decades. They were read by thousands, and extracts from them were published in all the important dailies of this vast land of ours. One of the dailies wanted to pay him for the copyright of his articles, but he declined to accept payment. His articles were published not only in India, but in foreign countries as well. In 1922, some of his articles were considered seditious, and he was imprisoned for six years on their account. Those who are familiar with his writings in the *Harijan* numbers of 1942, are well aware how he spread the fire of revolution in the country against British rule, and led the "Quit India" movement.

His language was so powerful and vigorous that it moved even the lethargic to action. He had good mastery of the English language. His style was lucid and he used it to express his thoughts and answer questions perfectly. There was not a word that was not relevant, and a line that did not tell. He remodelled the Gujarati language, and brought it up-to-date. Nobody served the cause of Hindi as much as he did. Before he advocated Hindi as the lingua franca of India, it was considered a provincial and inferior tongue. Now it has been raised to the dignity of a great national language. Along with Hindi, he pushed the cause of Urdu and emphasized the need of learning both the scripts. The mixture of both Hindi and Urdu he called Hindustani.

He hardly made any change in what he had written down, once he was convinced that his ideas were correct, well thought out, and consistent. He always said that he did not need to pause after he had begun to write, as his thoughts flowed easily. He felt as if some one else was dictating what he was writing. But whether it was a letter or an article, he would not pass it over until he had re-read it. He corrected with his own hand all the articles and letters written by others. Even Mahadevbhai had to bring his articles for correction to him before despatching them for publication. Nobody was allowed to publish his speech or statement until he had first obtained Bapu's approval. Lately there was compiled a list* of books written by Gandhiji, and about Gandhiji, the number of which has swelled to above 3,000. When all his letters, articles, and reports of speeches etc. are collected and published, they will not, I am sure, cover less than ten to fifteen thousand pages, and more will be added to them in time to come.

Gandhiji had a wonderful memory. Where others often forget even recent events, he was able to narrate incidents of fifty years ago in such a way, as if they had only just taken place. A person might have met him long ago, and yet he could remember even such small details as the colour of his tie, the cut of his coat, and the subject-matter of the talks he had had with him then. He could narrate all these things in detail. Thousands of people made his acquaintance, but once he had seen a face and heard the name he would not forget them. He might meet the same person again after many years, and he would tell him where they met. I always wondered how he managed to retain so many names, faces, incidents, and events in his memory. His experiences in South Africa were a sort of reference book for him. When an incident happened now he would refer to a similar one that happened then.

* *Gandhiana* (A Bibliography of Gandhian Literature), compiled by P. G. Deshpande and published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. Price, Rs 3-4-0, postage etc. As. 11.

Once his speech was written down, he could deliver it from memory, without written notes on the theme of the talk. If anybody dared to misquote him, he at once pointed out his mistake.

Gandhiji's first book was *Hind Swaraj* which he wrote in Gujarati in 1908, during his return voyage from London to South Africa, in answer to the Indian School of Violence and its prototype in South Africa. In this book he depicted the naked truth about the evils of modern civilization, and advised Indians not to follow the path of self-destruction. Side by side with it he mentioned the salient features of true Indian civilization. He said:

"The salvation of India lies in forgetting what she has learnt during the last fifty years. Rails, Telegraphs, Hospitals, Doctors, Pleaders, and other things of similar category will have to go, and the so-called upper classes will have to adopt the simple life of the Kisan with full conscience, Dharmic instinct, and determination, and they will have to realize that life is the source of real happiness."

He was not prepared to alter a word of what he had stated forty-five years back and firmly adhered to the same statements and principles, thus proving his unshakable belief in them. On the contrary, with the march of time he was even more convinced of the truth of what he had said then. *Hind Swaraj* is the key for understanding Gandhism, what it means, and advocates.

Most people could not understand Christ and his teachings till after he was crucified. Five centuries after the death of Lord Buddha, in Ashoka's time, people rediscovered him, and countries resounded with बुद्धं शरणं गच्छामि (I take refuge at Buddha's feet). Gandhiji too is not properly understood by people of contemporary times, for, is it not an undisputed fact that a member of the very same Hindu society, for whose betterment he worked constantly and unceasingly, had assassinated him? He will be really understood and appreciated as a sage by people some centuries hence, as has been the case with most of the wise, learned, and spiritual giants known to mankind.

## XXI

## INTERVIEWS

When Bapuji visited Delhi, for what turned out to be the last time, he entrusted me with the work of arranging his interviews, attending to his Urdu correspondence and fixing up things so that they fitted into his daily routine. In addition to seeing to these matters, I also read the newspapers to him while he took his morning walks, and gave him his massage ,as Drs. Sushila and Dinshah were absent.

The time for interviews was usually fixed between 2 and 4 p.m., but the number of interviews asked for was sometimes so great that each person was given a maximum of fifteen minutes. When Gandhiji felt tired he would exclaim, "Should I give up all other work for the sake of giving interviews?" I queried whether I should cancel the rest. The reply was, "No. Why should anybody go back disappointed? Let them also come."

One could hardly believe the tales of woe that were related to him. The day had only 24 hours, but everybody wanted to meet him, and implored, "Please let me have a moment with him." "One moment will be over by the time you go in and sit there. Have pity on him and give him a breathing spell", I would reply.

But he who is miserable, alone knows the true meaning of sorrow. Those unfortunate people told me: "We have been turned out from everywhere, and everywhere we have faced disappointment. We also do not wish to trouble our dear Mahatma, but all other doors are closed to us except this one and shall we go back disappointed even from here?" What answer could I give to such a heart-rending argument? Some of them were, of course, displeased with me; they abused me and showed their anger, and threatened me with Satyagraha. Some returned as they were convinced of the truth of my plea, but others were so

adamant that I had to yield. I would then go to Gandhiji, because there was no escape from some of these persistent people although I knew fully well that he needed respite from the constant strain people imposed on him, and that his whole time was occupied. I would go to Bapuji and silently stand before him. Seeing me he would raise his head and ask what the matter was.

"Bapuji, so and so insists on seeing you. What shall I say?"

"Show him in."

But an interview is still in progress. The time is up, and I wonder how to interrupt him. I would look at him again and again to attract his attention, but he is much engrossed in conversation, and does not pay any heed to me. What to do? At last, the interview would come to an end after thirty minutes, instead of fifteen.

He would then ask, "How many still remain to be seen?"

"A few more."

"Why did you not interrupt me at the exact time?"

What could I say? Rather hesitatingly I would suggest: "Shall I tell the rest to come some other time?"

"No, no, let them also see me now. I shall finish with them in no time", was the prompt reply.

And the interviews would continue again. Whoever had the privilege of meeting him would go away fully satisfied. If he had not finished what he wanted to discuss, Bapuji would suggest that the interviewer should make another appointment through me.

There was no fixed hour for the Ministers to call on Gandhiji. They were allowed to come at any time, as Bapuji considered their time more valuable than his own. "They have to run the Government, and they can come only when they find time", was his argument. When a Minister came in between other interviewers' appointments it always created confusion, still Bapuji would fit it in somehow or other.

Officially, only two hours daily were kept for interviews, but, in fact, they really began from early morning.

He used to get up at the crack of dawn at 3-30 a.m. and perform his toilette. Even at this hour someone of his companions would put his own pressing problem, either personal or general, before him. Prayers were held between 3-40 and 4 a.m., after which Bapu began his arduous day's work. Occasionally, an interview was granted after prayers. If he had time, he would have a short nap for a while, and then went for his morning stroll. At this hour special interviews were often given. Gandhiji and the person seeing him would talk as they walked. If there were no interviews, the morning news would be read out to him. After his walks, he took massage for half an hour. This invigorated him and kept him physically fit. At that time, either he studied Bengali, or listened to the news, or had talks with those desiring to consult him on various matters. Usually, I had my say at this time. After his massage, he went to his 'library' and read the morning papers. This was followed by his bath. Some talks were held even while he was having his bath! So full was his day! After bath, breakfast was served. At this hour also special interviews were granted. A special, daily appointment was given to the Delhi Maulvis after his lunch at 11-30 a.m. After finishing with them, he rested for a while, and then rose to attend to his work. Some days this time also would be occupied in giving interviews! From two to four was his usual interview time, and this was also the time when he did his spinning. His evening meal was served at 4 o'clock. As he ate, Bapu discussed many things both weighty and light. At 5 p.m. he attended evening prayers, and after prayers took his daily walks. That time too was generally taken up by people desiring to talk to him. After his walk, he corrected his post-prayer speech, as not a word could be printed, or said as having come from him, unless he had himself passed it. At this hour also some one dropped in to meet him. Usually, Pandit Jawaharlal preferred this time; thus, it usually was nine or ten at night when interviews and consultations ended, and he could prepare to retire after a long and strenuous day. Before going to bed Bapuji used to wash his feet. Even at this late

hour some talk or other would still continue. At last, completely exhausted with more than a full day's work, he would lie down in his bed. At this hour, his companions got an opportunity of talking over their personal problems with him, and sometimes it was eleven p.m. before such talks ended. Inspite of all this, people often complained that they did not get an opportunity of having an interview with Bapu. Feeling dead tired, the Mahatma sometimes said, "Heaps of papers are lying on my table. I have to answer many letters. I hardly find time to reply to them. What to do ? Most of my time is taken up by these interviews."

I then suggested that the interviews be stopped. But how could this be allowed ? No. He would say, "I am here for the benefit of these people. If they derive some consolation by seeing me, it is enough for me."

This sort of programme went on day after day, till the end of his life. How Gandhiji stood the perpetual strain is a mystery !

Although his door was open to everybody, still, some restrictions were necessary. At times lunatics turned up. Some came aimlessly ; others in search of business or in search of employment ; yet others in search of accommodation. Someone came to complain of a theft in his house. Another came to complain that his goods had not been delivered. Yet another bemoaned that he had lost his child. Some came to show their wounds ; others to narrate that all their people had been murdered. Still another related that his mother or sister had been molested. Though many Refugees repeated the same old story again and again, Bapu never turned them away, but listened to their sad tales with inexhaustible patience that was saint-like. In this way, thousands, and different kinds of complaints were carried to Bapuji, and, barring a few, everybody returned consoled and satisfied. People gave special importance to his post-prayer speeches. Everybody thought that if Gandhiji mentioned his particular troubles through the microphone while speaking, they would be redressed in no time. There were several such persons who asked me just to put their complaints before Bapuji, so that he might

repeat them through the loud-speaker during his post-prayer speech, if it was not possible to see him; they believed that their complaints could be attended to in this way.

Recollecting those days, I wonder what has been the lot of those people who flocked to Birla House from morning till night, and would not allow Bapuji a moment's peace. Who listens to their complaints now? I wonder if they sometimes weep for Gandhiji, remembering him. I have met many Punjabi Refugees who have told me that they were confident that if Gandhiji had gone to the Punjab he would have managed to see that they were sent back to their own villages and homes. But his tragic assassination shattered the hope of millions, and now there is no hope left that they will see their homes again.

Some Refugees had occupied a house next to Birla House. The Government ordered them to vacate. A notice to that effect was served on them. The police came to take possession of the house. These Refugees rushed to Bapuji and began to weep. Gandhiji called up the Minister in charge, and asked him not to have the house vacated till he could provide these destitutes with alternative accommodation. The Minister had to bow to the Mahatma's request, and changed his order. The Refugees thanked Bapu. They are still there, probably blessing him.

He was always able to carry on an interesting and intelligent conversation on so many different topics that we wondered at his versatility and flexibility. At one moment he might be talking about the beauty of the sunset sky, and at the next he might discuss the benefits we derive from the bounteous earth. He would have just returned after interviewing the Governor General on the future set-up of India, and yet you would find him discussing with somebody about his home affairs at the very next moment. Or, one might find Gandhiji talking about the relationship between a certain wife and husband not being cordial, or who should marry whom, or, how to meet the household expenses, or, what business should one do, and so on — *ad infinitum*. Sardar

Patel and Pandit Nehru might have just left after discussing State affairs, when, the very next moment, one might discover him expounding on how to prepare jaggery from the juice of the palm tree, or which quality of rice should be eaten for health reasons, or what qualities various vegetables and fruit had, or the great usefulness of Nature cure. Some Ambassador might have left a moment before, after discussing his country's affairs with him, and the next moment he would discuss a new theory about the stars, or about the atom bomb, about the achievements of some scientist, or about the war, or about spirituality. Although the topics were so varied, still Gandhiji dealt with every subject in such a simple and direct way, and with such confidence that everybody was impressed with Bapu's vast store of knowledge, his lack of pride, and his true humility.

## XXII

## TRUTH AND GOD

Gandhiji was essentially a man of God in whom he had immense faith, and a man of prayer ; the latter was as much a part of his daily life, as breathing or eating. To him, a life separated from God, was of no consequence and could not exist with any degree of peace of mind or happiness. To quote him : "My own experience has led me to the knowledge that the fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a living law, in obedience to which the whole universe moves. A man without that faith is like a drop thrown out of the ocean bound to perish. Every drop in the ocean shares its majesty and has the honour of giving us the ozone of life." (*Harijan*, 25-4-'36, p. 84)

A little delay in attending prayers which were fixed for a certain time daily would make him restless. He would then say that he could live without food for weeks, without water for some time, but without prayer or Ramanama not for a moment. "You may pluck out my eyes but, that cannot kill me, you may chop off my nose but that will not

kill me. But blast my belief in God and I am dead", said he. (*Harijan*, 14-5-'38)

His Rama was omnipresent. He was present in both life and matter. Rama's influence was present in his every act, and all his actions were for His sake. He pervaded every breath of his life, and had taken complete possession of his heart. He asked everyone to be introspective at prayer time, and insisted that they concentrate on the true meaning of prayer. The following saying of Kabir's was a favourite with Bapu, who thought it very apt when applied to the majority of people :

"The rosary is being turned in the hand, the tongue in the mouth ;

The mind is wandering in all directions — This is no remembrance."

Gandhiji held congregational prayers. He prayed, not for his own sake as he needed nothing, being ever engrossed in God ; his prayers were for the welfare of all human beings.

It is a well-known fact that he was a constant seeker after Truth and Non-violence. For him, both were one and the same. If any difference existed between the two, it was this : He considered non-violence the means and Truth the end. He observed, "If we take full care of the means, we are sure to achieve the end sooner or later. But as long as we are encased in this mortal body, it is impossible to achieve complete Truth. We can only think of complete Truth, but we cannot realize that which is Eternal with this body." Defining God, he said :

"There is an indefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen Power which makes itself felt, and yet defies all proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses.

"But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. Even in ordinary affairs we know that people do not know who rules, or why, and how he rules. And yet they know that there is a Power that certainly rules.

"I do feel that there is orderliness in the universe, that there is an unalterable Law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings. That Law which governs all life is God. The Law and the Law-giver are one. I may not deny the Law, or the Law-giver, because I know so little about It or Him. Even as my denial or ignorance of the existence of an earthly power will avail me nothing, so will not my denial of God and His Law liberate me from its operation; whereas humble and mute acceptance of divine authority makes life's journey easier, even as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier.

"I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living Power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing Power, or Spirit, is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can, or will, persist, He alone is. And is this Power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent. For I can see that in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists. Hence, I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the supreme Good.

"But He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in even the smallest act of His votary. This can only be done, through a definite realization more real than the five senses can ever produce. Sense perceptions can be, often are, false and deceptive, however real they may appear to us. Where there is realization outside the senses it is infallible. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within.

"Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself.

"This realization is preceded by an immovable faith. He who would in his own person test the fact of God's presence can do so by a living faith. And since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world, and, therefore, in the supremacy of the moral law, the law of Truth and Love. Exercise of faith will be safest where there is a clear determination summarily to reject all that is contrary to Truth and Love." (*Young India*, 11-10-'28 pp. 340-41)

"We may all have different definitions for 'God'. If we could all give our own definitions of God there would be as many definitions as there are men and women. But behind all that variety of definitions there would be also a certain sameness which would be unmistakable. For the root is one. God is that indefinable something which we all feel, but which we do not know. To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness. God is the source of Light and Life and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. For in His boundless love God permits the atheist to live. He is the searcher of hearts. He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not take us at our word for He knows that we often do not mean it, some knowingly and others unknowingly. He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied in those who need His touch. He is the purest essence. He simply *is* to those who have faith. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us. What is a solemn affirmation if it is not the same thing as in the name of God? And surely conscience is but a poor and laborious paraphrase of the simple combination of three letters called God. He cannot cease to be because hideous immoralities or inhuman brutalities are committed in His name. He is long-suffering. He is patient, but He is also terrible. He is the most exacting personage in the world and the world to come. He metes out the same measure to us that we mete out to our neighbours — men and brutes.

With Him ignorance is no excuse. And withal He is ever forgiving. He always gives us the chance to repent. He is the greatest democrat the world knows; He leaves us 'unfettered' to make our own choice between evil and good. He is the greatest tyrant ever known, for He often dashes the cup from our lips and under cover of free will leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for Himself at our expense. Therefore, it is that Hinduism calls it all His sport — Lila, or describes it as illusion — Maya. We are *not*, He alone *Is*. And if we will be, we must eternally sing His praise and do His will. Let us dance to the tune of His Bansi — flute, and all will be well." (*Young India*, 5-3-'25)

Defining Truth he said, "The word Satya (truth) is derived from Sat which means being. And nothing is, or exists in reality, except truth. That is why Sat or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact, it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth. But as we cannot do without a Ruler or a General, names of God such as 'King of Kings', or the Almighty are and will remain more usually current. On deeper thinking however it will be realized that Sat or Satya is the only correct and fully significant name for God.

"And where there is Truth, there also is knowledge, pure knowledge. Where there is no Truth, there can be no true knowledge. That is why Chit or knowledge is associated with the name of God, and where there is true knowledge there is always bliss (Ananda). Sorrow has no place there. And even as truth is eternal, so is the bliss derived from it. Hence we know God as Sat-Chit-Ananda, One who combines in Himself truth, knowledge and bliss.

"Devotion to this truth is the sole reason for our existence. All our activities should be centred in truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrim's progress is reached, all other rules of correct living will come without effort, and obedience to them will be instinctive. But without truth, it would be impossible to observe any principles or rules in life.

"Generally speaking, observing the Law of Truth is merely understood to mean that we must speak the truth. But we in the Ashram understand the word Satya or truth in a much wider sense. There should be truth in thought, truth in speech and truth in action. To the man who has completely realized this truth, nothing else remains to be known, because all knowledge is necessarily included in it. What is not included in it is not truth, and so not true knowledge; and there can be no inward peace without true knowledge. If we once learn how to apply this never-failing test of truth, we will at once be able to find out what is worth doing, what is worth seeing, what is worth reading.

"But how is one to realize this truth, which may be likened to the philosopher's stone, or to the cow of plenty? By single-minded devotion (Abhyas) and indifference to every other interest in life (Vairagya), replies the Bhagavad-gita. Inspite, however, of such devotion what may appear as truth to one person will often appear as untruth to another person. But that need not worry the seeker. When there is honest effort, it will be realized that what appear to be different truths are like apparently different countless leaves of the same tree. Does not God Himself appear to different individuals in different aspects? Still, we know that He is One. But Truth is the right designation of God. Hence there is nothing wrong in everyone following truth according to his own light. Indeed, it is one's duty to do so. Then, if there is a mistake on the part of any one so following truth, it will be automatically set right. For the quest of truth involves Tapas — self-suffering, sometimes even unto death. There can be no place in it for even a trace of self-interest. In such selfless search for truth nobody can lose his bearings for long. Directly one takes the wrong path one stumbles and is thus redirected to the right path. Therefore, the pursuit of truth is true Bhakti (devotion). It is the path that leads to God and therefore there is no place in it for cowardice, no place for defeat. It is the talisman by which death itself becomes the portal to life eternal." (*Young India*, 30-7-'31, p. 196)

"How beautiful it would be, if all of us, young and old, men and women, devoted ourselves wholly to truth in all that we might do in our working hours, whether working, eating, drinking or playing till pure dreamless sleep claimed us for her own? God as truth has been, for me, a treasure beyond price; may He be so to everyone of us."

Further elucidating his idea of truth Gandhiji said, "I have been asked why I consider that God is Truth. In my early youth I was taught to repeat what in Hindu Scriptures are known as one thousand names of God. But these one thousand names of God were by no means exhaustive. We believe — and I think it is the truth — that God has as many names as there are creatures, and therefore we also say that God is nameless, and since God has many forms we also consider Him formless, and since He speaks to us through many tongues we consider Him to be speechless, and so on. And when I came to study Islam I found that Islam too had many names for God. I would say with those who say God is Love, God is Love. But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be God, God is Truth, above all. If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description, I have come to the conclusion that for myself God is Truth. But two years ago, I went a step further and said Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements, viz., that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to the conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after truth which began nearly fifty years ago. I then found that the nearest approach to Truth was through love. But I also found that love has many meanings in the English language at least, and that human love in the sense of passion could become a degrading thing also. I found too that love in the sense of Ahimsa had only a limited number of votaries in the world. But I never found a double meaning in connection with truth, and not even atheists had demurred to the necessity or power of truth. But in their passion for discovering truth atheists have not hesitated to deny the very existence of God — from their own point of view rightly. And it was because of this reasoning that I

saw that rather than say God is truth, I should say truth is God. I recall the name of Charles Bradlaugh, who delighted to call himself an atheist, but knowing as I do something of him, I would never regard him as an atheist. I would call him a God-fearing man, though I know he would reject the claim. His face would redden if I should say, 'Mr Bradlaugh you are a truth-fearing man, and not a God-fearing man.' I would automatically disarm his criticism by saying that truth is God, as I have disarmed the criticism of many a young man. Add to this the difficulty that millions have taken the name of God, and in His name, committed nameless atrocities. Not that scientists very often do not commit cruelties in the name of truth. I know how in the name of truth and science inhuman cruelties are perpetrated on animals when men perform vivisection. There are thus a number of difficulties in the way, no matter how you describe God. But the human mind is a limited thing, and you have to labour under limitations when you think of a being or entity who is beyond the power of man to grasp. And then we have another thing in Hindu philosophy viz., God alone is and nothing else exists, and the same truth you find emphasized and exemplified in the Kalma of Islam. There you find it clearly stated that God alone is and nothing else exists. In fact the Sanskrit word for truth is a word which literally means 'that which exists'—Sat. For these and several other reasons that I can give you I have come to the conclusion that the definition—Truth is God—gives me the greatest satisfaction. And when you want to find truth as God the only inevitable means is love i.e. non-violence, and since I believe that ultimately means and end are convertible terms, I should not hesitate to say that God is Love.

"What then is Truth?

"A difficult question, but I have solved it for myself by saying that it is what the voice within tells you. How, then, you ask, do different people think of different and contrary truths? Well, seeing that the human mind works through innumerable media and that the evolution of the human mind is not the same for all, it follows that what may be

truth for one may be untruth for another, and hence those who have made experiments have come to the conclusion that there are certain conditions to be observed in making those experiments. Just as for conducting scientific experiments there is an indispensable scientific course of instruction, in the same way strict preliminary discipline is necessary to qualify a person to make experiments in the spiritual realm. Everyone should, therefore, realize his limitations before he speaks of his inner voice. Therefore, we have the belief based upon experience, that those who would make individual search after truth as God, must go through several vows, as for instance, the vow of truth, the vow of Brahmacharya (purity) — for you cannot possibly divide your love for truth and God with anything else —, the vow of non-violence, of poverty and non-possession. Unless you impose on yourselves the five vows, you may not embark on the experiment at all. There are several other conditions prescribed, but I must not take you through all of them. Suffice it to say that those who have made these experiments know that it is not proper for everyone to claim to hear the voice of conscience without going through any form of discipline whatsoever, and there is so much untruth being delivered to a bewildered world. All that I can in true humility present to you is that truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of truth you must reduce yourselves to a zero. Further than this I cannot go along this fascinating path." (*Young India*, 31-12-'31, p. 428)

"People say that I have changed my views, that I say today something different to what I said years ago. The fact of the matter is that conditions have changed. I am the same. My words and deeds are dictated by prevailing conditions. There has been a gradual evolution in my environment, and I react to it as a Satyagrahi ". (*Harijan*, 28-1-'39, p. 445)

"At the time of writing I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with my previous statements on a given question, but to be consistent

with truth, as it may present itself to me at a given moment. The result has been that I have grown from truth to truth. I have saved my memory an added strain, and what is more, whenever I have been obliged to compare my writings even of fifty years ago with the latest, I have discovered no inconsistency between the two. But friends who observe inconsistency will do well to take the meaning that my latest writing may yield unless, of course, they prefer the old. But before making the choice they should try to see if there is not an underlying and abiding consistency between the two seeming inconsistencies". (*Harijan*, 30-9-'39, p. 288)

Asked as to what is the best form of prayer and how much time should be spent on it, Gandhiji replied :

" It seems to me that it is the yearning of the heart to be one with the Maker, an invocation for His blessing. It is, in this case, the attitude that matters, not the words uttered or muttered. And, often, the association of words that have been handed down from ancient times has an effect, which in their rendering into one's mother tongue, they will lose altogether. Thus the Gayatri translated and recited in Gujarati will not have the same effect as the original. The utterance of the word Rama will instantaneously affect millions of Hindus, when the word God, although they may understand the meaning, will leave them untouched. Words, after all, acquire a power by long usage and sacredness associated with their use. There is much, therefore, to be said for the retention of the old Sanskrit formula for the most prevalent Mantras or verses. That the meaning of them should be properly understood goes without saying.

" There can be no fixed rule laid down as to the time these devotional acts should take. It depends upon individual temperament. These are precious moments in one's daily life. The exercises are intended to sober and humble us and enable us to realize that nothing happens without His will, and that we are but clay in the hands of the Potter. These are moments when one reviews one's immediate

past, confesses one's weakness, asks for forgiveness, and strength to be and do better. One minute may be enough for some, twenty-four hours may be too little for others. For those who are filled with the presence of God in them, to labour is to pray. Their life is one continuous prayer or act of worship. For those others, who act only to sin, to indulge themselves, and live for self, no time is too much. If they had patience and faith and the will to be pure, they would pray till they feel the definite purifying presence of God within them. For us ordinary mortals there must be a middle path between these two extremes. We are not so exalted as to be able to say that all our acts are a dedication, nor perhaps are we so far gone as to be living purely for self. Hence, have all religions set apart times for general devotion. Unfortunately these have nowadays become merely mechanical and formal, where they are not hypocritical. What is necessary, therefore, is the correct attitude to accompany these devotions.

"For definite personal prayer in the sense of asking God for something, it should certainly be in one's own tongue. Nothing can be grander than to ask God to make us act justly towards everything that lives". (*Young India*, 10-6-'26, p. 211)

"Prayer is not an asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is a daily admission of one's weakness. The tallest among us has a perpetual reminder of his nothingness before death, disease, old age, accidents etc. We are living in the midst of death. What is the value of working for our own schemes when they might be reduced to naught in the twinkling of an eye or when we may be equally swiftly and unawares be taken away from them? But we may feel strong as a rock if we could truthfully say 'we work for God and His schemes'. Then all is clear as daylight. Then nothing perishes. All perishing is then only what seems. Death and destruction have then, but only then, no reality about them. For death or destruction is then but a change. An artist destroys his picture for creating a better one. A watch-maker throws away a bad spring to put in a new and useful one". (*Young India*, 23-9-'26, p. 333)

## XXIII

## SOME EARLIER INCIDENTS OF HIS LIFE

Gandhiji (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) was born on Ashwin Krishna 12th Samvat 1925, i.e. October 2, 1869, at Porbandar. His father's name was Shri Karamchand Gandhi and that of his mother Shrimati Putlibai. He spent his childhood at Porbandar, and was married at the age of 13 to Shrimati Kasturba. After having passed his matric in 1887 he went to England for his Bar examination. Before permitting him to go to England, his mother took three vows from him—not to touch wine, women, and meat. He was called to the Bar in 1891, and then returned home. He left for South Africa in 1893, in order to practise law there.

Gandhiji witnessed in South Africa the inhuman atrocities and injustice perpetrated by man on man in the name of racial superiority, and with the desire for maintaining white supremacy. Although he was a Bar-at-Law, he was called a 'Coolie' Barrister by the white people of that country, who called every Indian a Coolie regardless of his culture, social background, or financial standing. Indians were neither allowed to sit with the whites in the same railway carriage, or bus, nor were they allowed to walk on the same footpath, or stay in the same hotel or enter the same theatres or shops. Gandhiji felt keenly about this atrocious discrimination. There was a burning desire within him to revolt against this inhuman treatment and he decided to resist it.

He founded the Natal Congress in 1894, and also started the *Indian Opinion*, a weekly journal, in 1904 under his editorship. Referring to this weekly he once wrote: "Every week I pour my soul into it, and try to explain that thing, which, I understand by the name of Satyagraha."

At this very time, Gandhiji read Ruskin's *Unto This Last* which revolutionized his whole life. He translated it into Gujarati and published it under the caption *Sarvodaya*. Its main principles are:

1. The good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

2. A lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's, as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

3. A life of labour, i.e. the life of tiller of the soil and the handicrafts-man is the life worth living.

Great changes were taking place in Gandhiji's ideas and thoughts during these days, which were also the days of his vows and fasts. In 1906, he took the vow of observing Brahmacharya.

He fought the South African Government in 1906 for the rights of his countrymen. He continued this struggle for eight years. Several times he went to jail to help to achieve his purpose, and in the end he achieved full success. He started his Tolstoy Ashram in 1912, and after completing his work in that country, he left for England in 1914. The first World War had just started at that time. He developed pleurisy, owing to excess of work, and had to return to India in 1915.

Although the fame of his Satyagraha movement in South Africa had already preceded him, the people of this country were wholly unaware of the new weapon, or its great power. Reaching India, Gandhiji had to face many problems one after the other, and very soon he got an opportunity of using his weapon of Satyagraha.

In 1915, Bapuji established his Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab, near Ahmedabad, and then he went to Champaran in Bihar where he resorted to Satyagraha in order to get rid of the system imposed by European indigo-planters on their tenants. Under his influence, the lives of Shri Brij Kishore, Rajendra Prasad, and many other prominent advocates and rich people underwent a great change. Our Union President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, was the first important personage to come under his influence. Just after the Champaran Satyagraha Bapuji organized a struggle against the millowners of Ahmedabad, and the labourers

received their first lesson in Satyagraha tactics from him. Before his entry in the industrial field, nobody had heard about peaceful strikes.

From 1919 onwards Gandhiji fully entered the political life of India, and by raising the agitation against the Rowlatt Act he spread the Satyagraha movement throughout the country. At that time, there were two parties in Indian politics: (i) Extremists, under the leadership of Lokamanya Tilak, and (ii) Moderates, under the leadership of Shrinivas Shastri. The Congress activities were limited to holding an annual session, once every year, and submitting resolutions to the Government. After that they dispersed, and went home.

Gandhiji had his own method of action, which was well-planned and most systematic. He entirely changed the then existing Congress organization. He also continued to send resolutions to the Government, after getting them passed, but his submission was not lifeless. It had the strength of action behind it. Whatever he said, he said thoughtfully, and whatever he decided, he tried to implement. As he would not act secretly, he would divulge his plans to the Government before putting them into action. These methods of his were quite new both to the Government and to the people. The Government did not know how to tackle them, as it relied on force and violence, hence it had to face a dilemma that seemed difficult to solve.

The first effect of Satyagraha was that it made the people fearless. At that time there were a few revolutionaries who worked in secret, but they were caught sooner or later. The results of such abortive coups proved to be so poor that people faced failure in the place of the progress they had expected, and they were terrified. But Gandhiji's way filled them with hope, and developed in them the spirit of sacrifice.

Those people who had formerly been overcome by fear at the mere sight of a policeman's turban, now learnt to stand against lathi charges, and shootings.

Jail-going for political reasons which was formerly considered a dishonour, was now considered a merit. Not only men but also women began to court arrest. Sedition, which was preached in secret was now done openly and brazenly. Gandhiji carried the torch of revolution to every home. The son was separated from his father, the husband from his wife, the friend from his comrade. Each person paid attention to what he considered his particular duties, and began to partake in the gigantic struggle for the liberation of the Mother country from foreign yoke. Under Gandhiji's influence, advocates and doctors gave up their practices, students their studies and servicemen their services. Many of those who had British honours and titles gave them up, as their attraction was on the decrease. Wealthy people sacrificed their wealth, rulers gave up their power, addicts their bad habits of drink etc., and gamblers their gambling. Likewise, many of those who were leading a life of luxury, were persuaded to live a life of simplicity and restraint. Those who were admirers of Western civilization and foreign articles, began to wear a loin cloth like Bapu. Though he was not a teacher of religion, or a Guru, still he succeeded in making even atheists utter Ramanama. Those who were great admirers of modern industrial machinery took to Charkha spinning. Those who would not stir out of their houses unless they were in pucca European attire from head to foot were now going out bare-bodied and bare-footed. Those, who would not partake food which had been prepared by a low-caste person or a person of another religion, were now ready to clean the lavatories of those very people. Women, who had not seen the sun outside their own four walls, were now working side by side with men. The poor and helpless Kisan, who had always suffered injustice and rebuffs and did not dare to refuse to pay taxes lest his fields were taken away, his beloved cattle auctioned in his presence, his house plundered, and his relatives sent to jail, now was cheerful in the face of these very consequences. Had anybody heard of such things before Gandhiji appeared on the scene? Even the poor villagers

who did Begar (forced labour) formerly dared to refuse it now. Gandhiji's influence made all the things previously considered impossible possible now.

When Gandhiji attended the Congress Session at Amritsar in 1919, Lokamanya Tilak, together with his party also attended the Session. At that time, Tilak was considered the foremost Indian leader. But he was shrewd and far-sighted enough to understand that the Gandhian Age had begun, and hence he gave up his place to Bapu. While Gandhiji was making preparations for Civil Disobedience, Tilak took his leave after giving him his benedictions.

Next in power to Tilak Maharaj, were Lala Lajpat Rai, Maulana Azad, and the Ali Brothers as Extremist leaders. In 1914, the Government had harassed them all very much, under the Defence of India Act. They were interned, deported or imprisoned. But their politics were quite different from that of Gandhiji. After taking the reins of Indian politics in his hands, Gandhiji made great changes in the lives and policies of a great number of people. With his speeches and campaigns he began to attract new leaders and workers — imbibed with his ideas and ideals — in every province. Pandit Motilal was the leader from the U. P. By his enthusiastic following of Bapu, he influenced his promising son, Pandit Jawaharlal, and other members of his family, who followed in his foot-steps. Every district and village became filled with patriotic fervour. In Bengal, Deshbandhu C. R. Das took the lead. From Gujarat came both the Patel brothers. Shri Vallabhbhai became Sardar, not only of Gujarat, but also of the whole of India. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj took command of the Central Provinces. From Madras C. Rajagopalachari, Shrinivas Iyengar, and many other leaders and workers came forward. In Bihar, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was already a well-known figure. From Orissa, Assam and other provinces many new commanders, with their followers, joined the ever-increasing number of patriots. From Delhi, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari, and Swami Shraddhanand joined the struggle. In the N. W. F. Province Khan Abdul

Ghaffar Khan soon became known as the Frontier Gandhi. Thus, the whole counry echoed with the activities of its leaders and workers, and in a very short time the basis of the foreign Government in India was shaken by the power of Satyagraha. Foreign cloth was burnt at many a place, and the humming of the spinning wheel was heard in huts, as well as in palaces. Jail gates opened to receive men and women who courted arrest. They numbered thousands. Mothers bade goodbye to their sons with great affection; sisters to their brothers; wives to their husbands, as they went to jail. When opportunity offered, they also arose and joined them in prison.

In 1921, Bapuji prepared the draft for the first Constitution of the Congress. After that, whatever changes — such as different phraseology, additions, or deletions — were made in that Constitution, were always done under his direction. It was due to his influence that the Congress attained so much power in an incredibly short time. Satyagraha agitation which broke out on numerous occasions was possible only because of Congress approval and support. Thus was waged the fight for Independence. Gandhiji's last article was on the reorganization of the Congress. This matter was to be taken up and considered by the leaders on the 30th of January, 1948 — a date which was so fateful, as events proved!

He wanted to get rid of the creeping corruption in the Congress, and to convert this body into the Loka Sevak Sangh. He so well understood the mind of the people that he wanted to direct it along the path of truth, saving it from all temptations.

Hence, whichever way you look, and whatever organization you scrutinize, you will find that every worthy and true piece of work had Gandhiji's inspiration and guiding hand behind it. When a new enterprise was undertaken the sponsors would not rest satisfied unless they had Gandhiji's blessings, and assurance that it was a good idea and was sure to be a success. Pandit Jawaharlal has said that he

was so accustomed to taking Bapu's advice that when the matter of taking Bapu's body to the burning ghat was under consideration on that unfortunate night, he automatically got up to go to the Mahatma to consult him as to what should be done, but the next moment he realized that Bapu was no more.

Arjun had once asked Lord Krishna how he could realize Him — was it by constantly meditating on Him? In what various aspects should he think of Him? The Lord said : " There is no limit to my divine manifestations; whatever is glorious, beautiful, and mighty know thou that all such has issued from a fragment of my splendour."

Much the same thing can be said of Bapuji, of his activities and of his services. There was neither a limit nor an end to his Tapasya and Sadhana. Had he not been with us, to guide us who knows for how many more years we would have been enchained in slavery? Who else can be considered the giver of Indian Independence but Bapu? Whatever is glorious, beautiful, and mighty in our midst is all due to him, and is the result of his planning, his far-sightedness and his austerities. The leaders and workers of today, are all glorified by the radiance shed by his personality. It is only Gandhiji who can be rightfully called " Nation builder " and " Father of the Indian Nation " in the true sense.

Will God give us the wisdom to follow in the path shown by him, and shall we be able to act upon his advice and teachings?

" Neither do I desire supremacy of the earth, nor do I desire to attain heaven. I do not even crave for Mukti (salvation). What I desire is this that I may be a humble instrument in mitigating the miseries of my fellow-beings."

" May all be happy, may all be free from disease, may all see things that are good and may none have misery." These were the words of Bapu. The prayer and longing in them are as suitable today as when he uttered them, for the wish is still a long way away from being fulfilled.

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16 APR 1955
T. KALLUPATTI

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## NON-ENGLISH WORDS WITH THEIR MEANINGS

*Ahimsa* — non-violence ; love
*Angarkha* — a long shirt
*Anna* — a coin equivalent of a British penny
*Ashram* — a place for spiritual retirement ; Gandhiji's colony of public workers
*Ashramavasi* — one who lives in an Ashram
*Atishudra* — a member of the lowest caste ; an 'untouchable'
*Atma* — soul
*Atmashakti* — spiritual strength
*Azan* — a call to prayer
*Ba* — lit. mother ; a term of endearment used for Gandhiji's wife, Kasturba
*Babool* — a tree which grows wild in many parts of India
*Bahen* — lit. sister ; term of respect used for woman
*Bande Mataram, Vande Mataram* — a greeting meaning 'hail, Motherland'
*Bapu, Bapuji* — lit. father ; a term of endearment used for Gandhiji
*Bhajan* — devotional song
*Bhangi* — scavenger
*Brahmacharya* — celibacy ; chastity
*Bustee* — section of a town
*Chaddar* — sheet of cloth
*Chakra* — wheel
*Chapal, chappal* — leather sandals
*Chapati* — flat, unleavened bread
*Charkha* — spinning wheel
*Charkha Dwadashi* — Gandhiji's birthday according to the Hindu calendar
*Charkha Jayanti* — anniversary of the spinning wheel ; another name for Gandhiji's birthday
*Charkha Sangh* — Spinners' Association
*Charpai* — simple, four-legged rope cot

*Coolie* — lit. wage-earner ; a term of contempt used by South African whites for Indians in South Africa
*Crore* — 10,000,000
*Dak bungalow* — travellers' rest-house
*Dal* — pulse
*Dandi* — canvas chair or couch in which a person is carried
*Darshan* — a look at some great person or god
*Dar-ul-Harb* — battlefield
*Dharma* — religious duty
*Dharma Guru* — religious teacher
*Dharmashala* — free rest-house for travellers
*Dhoti* — cloth worn round the waist by men
*Divali* — festival of lights
*Durbar* — royal reception
*Gandhi Jayanti* — Gandhiji's birthday celebrations
*Gandhi Seva Sangh* — an Association of those pledged to Gandhian ideals
*Gayatri* — A Vedic Mantra addressed to God Sun and used in daily prayer and meditation
*Ghar* — house
*Ghee* — clarified butter
*Ghia* — pumpkin
*Goseva Sangh* — Association for the improvement of cattle
*Gramodyoga Sangh* — Village Industries Association
*Granth Sahib* — the Bible of the Sikhs
*Gur* — unrefined, brown product used for sweetening in the place of sugar
*Guru* — teacher
*Gurudev* — lit. great teacher ; a term of respect used for Poet Tagore
*Gurukula* — lit. a teacher's family ; ancient type of school where pupils lived with their teacher
*Harijan* — lit. people of God ; a term used by Gandhiji for 'untouchables'
*Harijan Sevak Sangh* — Association for the service of 'untouchables'
*Hartal* — temporary cessation of business or work
*He Rama* — Oh God (Gandhiji's last words as he died)
*Hundi* — bill of exchange

*Jai* — victory
Jai Hind — victory to India
*Jehad* — a holy war
*Karmavir* — a hero of action
*Karmayoga* — a way of attaining salvation through action
*Karmayogi* — one who seeks salvation through action
*Katcha* — improvised ; not complete or permanent
*Khaddar, Khadi* — hand-spun, hand-woven cloth
*Khichadi* — rice and pulse cooked together
*Khudai Khidmatgars* — lit. servants of God ; the name of a body of volunteers organized by Khan Abdul Gaffar in North-West Frontier Province
*Kirpan* — dagger worn by Sikhs as a part of their religion
*Kisan* — peasant
*Kos* — two miles
*Kumbha Mela* — a Hindu religious fair
*Lakh* — 100,000
*Lathi* — long, bamboo stick
*Loka Sevak Sangh* — Association of servants of the people
*Mahant* — high priest
*Maharaj* — lit. great king ; a term indicative of respect
*Mahatma* — lit. great soul ; a title used for Gandhiji
*Mahayajna* — great sacrifice
*Maidan* — open ground
*Mandir* — temple
*Mantra* — pithy saying used for meditation ; slogan
*Manu* — a great Hindu law-giver
*Manzil* — residence
*Marwadi* — name of a mercantile caste
*Maryada Purushottama* — supreme embodiment of virtue
*Masjid* — mosque
*Maun Samadhi* — a state of silent contemplation leading to cessation of consciousness
*Mausambi* — sweet lime
*Mazar* — tomb
*Mazdoor* — labourer
*Mohalla* — section of a town or a village
*Mulla* — Muslim priest
*Muni* — religious teacher

*Muradabadi* — made in Muradabad, noted for carved brass-ware
*Musafirkhana* — free rest-house for travellers
*Nai Talim* — lit. new education ; education based on handi-crafts, as propagated by Gandhiji
*Niwas* — residence
*Om* — sacred syllable uttered at the start of prayers
*Panchayat* — a managing council of five or more members
*Pandal* — a temporary open-air covered structure, made of bamboo sticks and palm leaves or cloth
*Panja Sahib* — a Sikh shrine
*Patil* — village headman
*Phooka* — a process of inserting a substance like a rod in the generative organ of the cow to make it yield more milk
*Pie* — one-twelfth of an English penny
*Pranashakti* — capacity for breathing
*Pucca* — proper ; complete
*Pujya* — respected
*Punya* — merit
*Purdah* — veil worn by women
*Purna Swaraj* — complete self-government
*Rahim* — Muslim name for God
*Raj* — rule ; government
*Rajayoga* — easy mode of religious meditation (fit for kings to practise)
*Rama* — Hindu name for God
*Ramadhun* — repeating in a chant the name of God or Rama
*Ramanama* — lit. name of Rama i.e. of God
*Ramarajya* — the Kingdom of God
*Rashtra Pita* — Father of the Nation
*Rashtriya Sevak Sangh*, R. S. S. — a militant Hindu organization
*Roti* — bread
*Ryot* — peasant
*Sadhana* — means for self-realization
*Sadhu* — religious mendicant
*Saheb* — suffix indicating respect
*Salam* — lit. peace be to you ; a form of greeting

*Sanatana Dharma* — religion of old i.e. orthodox Hinduism
*Sangh* — Association
*Sardar* — chief
*Sarvodaya* — a social order aiming at the wellbeing of all
*Sattvik Vritti* — good nature
*Satya* — truth
*Satyagraha* — lit. clinging to truth; non-violent resistance
*Satyagrahi* — one pledged to non-violent resistance
*Sevak* — social worker
*Shabad* — Sikh prayers
*Shamiana* — a large tent for holding meetings
*Shanti* — peace
*Shiva Bharati* — ill-assorted assemblage
*Shloka* — verse
*Sohag bangles* — bangles indicating that a woman's husband is alive
*Swadeshi* — preference for goods manufactured locally
*Swaraj* — self-government
*Takli* — a spindle worked by hand, without the aid of a spinning wheel
*Talimi Sangh* — Association for spreading the New Education of Gandhiji
*Talukdar* — owner of a group of villages
*Tambura* — a stringed musical instrument
*Tapas, tapasya* — penance; voluntary suffering
*Tilak* — a red mark placed on the forehead to indicate good wishes
*Tonga* — a horse-cart
*Udyoga shala* — industrial institute
*Upadesh* — advice
*Vairagi* — one indifferent to the world; ascetic
*Vaishya* — the third caste, consisting of agriculturists and traders
*Varnashram* — the principle of following hereditary occupations
*Vidyapith* — national university
*Vina* — a stringed musical instrument
*Zamindar* — landlord